

**POW SURVIVOR** "I'LL NEVER FORGET THOSE LEFT BEHIND"

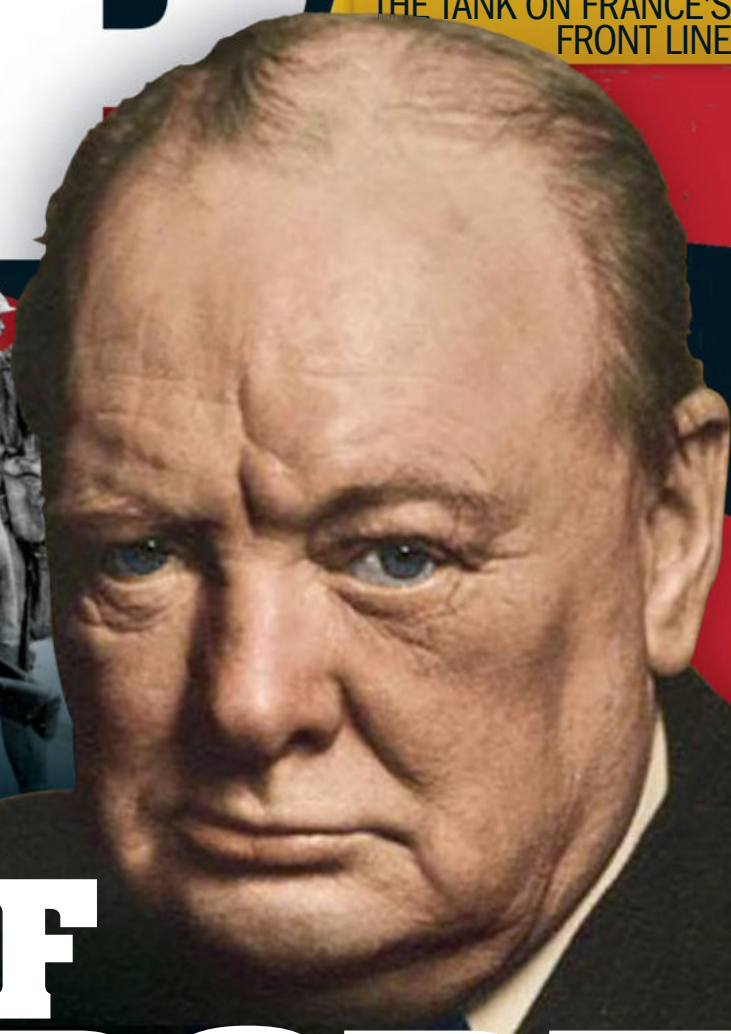
# HISTORY of WAR



**CHAR DI**  
THE TANK ON FRANCE'S  
FRONT LINE



**BATTLE OF THE  
PYRAMIDS**  
NAPOLEON'S VICTORY  
IN EGYPT



**"THE WORST DISASTER  
IN BRITISH HISTORY"**

# THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

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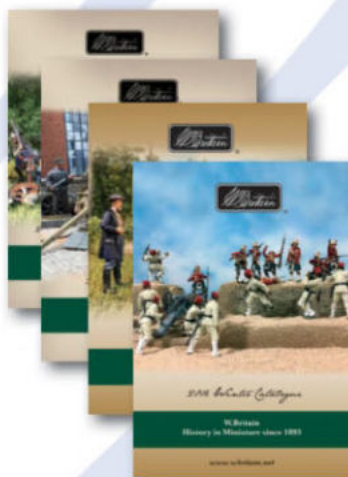
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# Welcome

**“You realised that you had a different environment to adapt to. Those that didn’t, suffered... A lot of those that didn’t adapt didn’t come home”**

– Bob Hucklesby, British Army Royal Engineers veteran

If it's true that WWII saw the demise of the British Empire, then the fall of Singapore in 1942 was surely its death knell. Churchill later called it the “worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history” and for the tens of thousands of loyal troops ready to defend the Empire, the surrender of the garrison on 15 February was a humiliating and dismal defeat.

Among the British forces 75 years ago was Bob Hucklesby, a young army engineer who only days earlier had arrived ready to fight. Soon he and his comrades were facing the grim reality of imprisonment and unspeakable

cruelty at the hands of the enemy. This issue explores both their struggle, and the disastrous Malayan Campaign.



*Tim*  
**Tim Williamson**  
Editor



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## CONTRIBUTORS



### TOM GARNER

This issue Tom spoke with veteran Bob Hucklesby about his experiences serving in Singapore and his subsequent internment by the Japanese (p.28). Elsewhere he also takes a look at the exploits of Bertrand du Guesclin (p.86)



### MIKE HASKEEW

For this issue's Operator's Handbook, Mike takes a look at the understated Renault Char D1 NC27. This prototype light tank was acquired by Sweden in the 1920s and is now on display at the Arsenalen Tank Museum (p.58).



### DAVID SMITH

America and Britain may be close allies today, but two centuries ago they were locked in the vicious War of 1812. Over on page 64, David explores events leading up to the infamous burning of Washington, DC and the White House.

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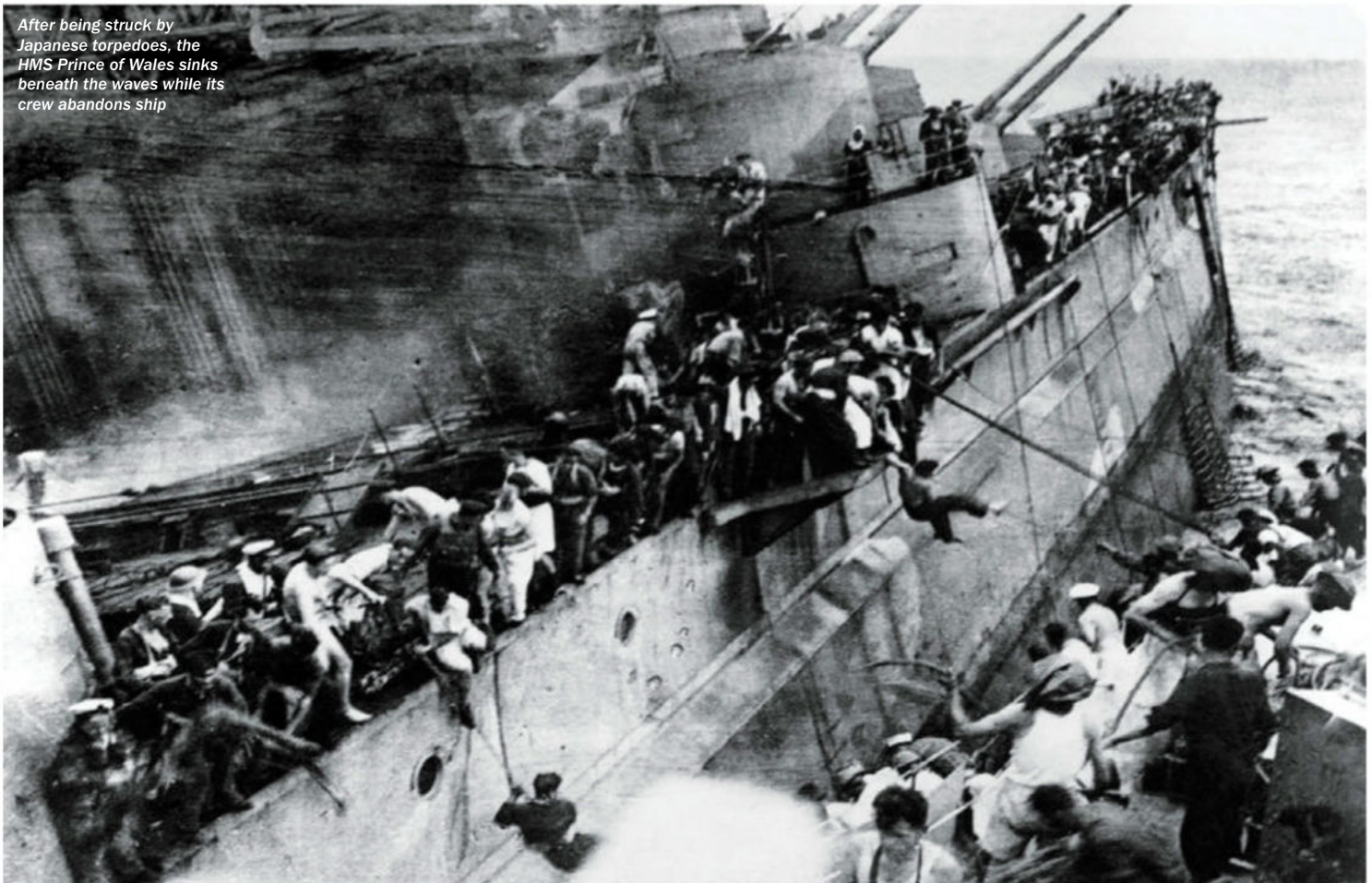


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After being struck by Japanese torpedoes, the HMS Prince of Wales sinks beneath the waves while its crew abandons ship







# THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

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## Frontline

### **14 Italian Wars**

This series of conflicts in Renaissance Europe saw the clash of the continent's superpowers

### **16 War in Italy and beyond**

Though focused on the peninsula, these dynastic clashes sparked up across the map

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In this crucial clash of arms, Francis I found himself a prisoner of Emperor Charles V

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A German Landsknecht takes on a Swiss pikeman

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With the advent of increasingly destructive artillery, did fortifications help redefine state borders?

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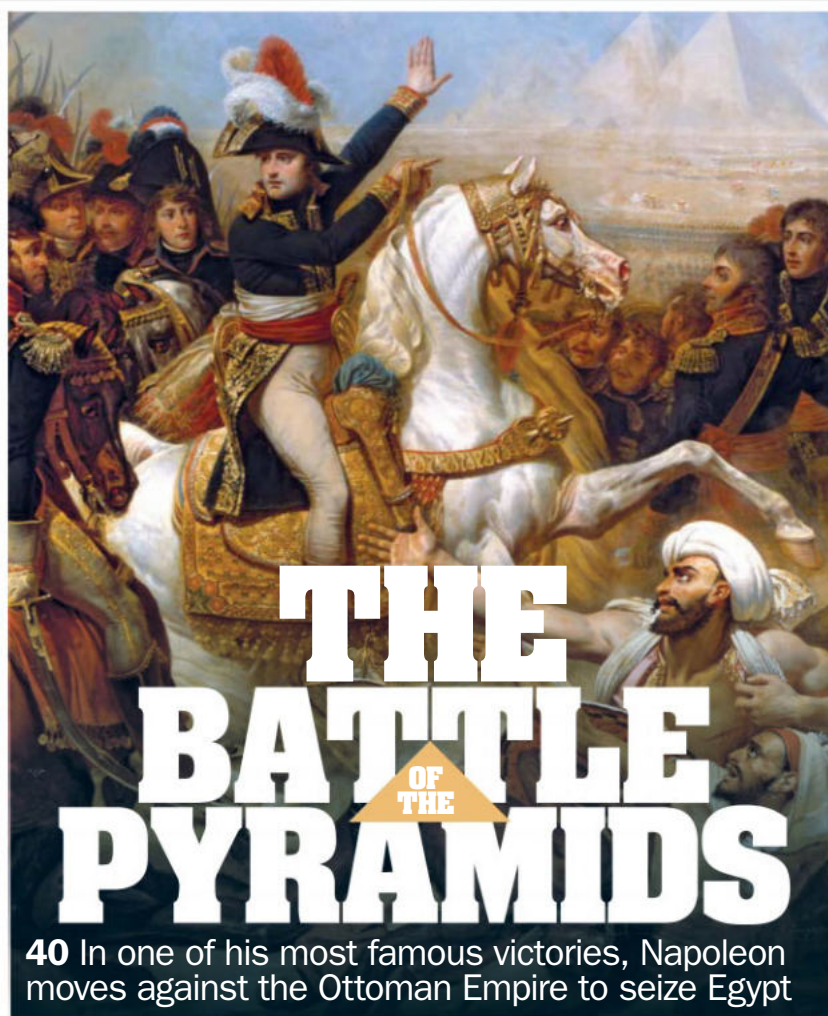
During this turbulent period, new units, technology and tactics came to the fore

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With the opportunity to win glory and fame, many soldiers distinguished themselves in the field

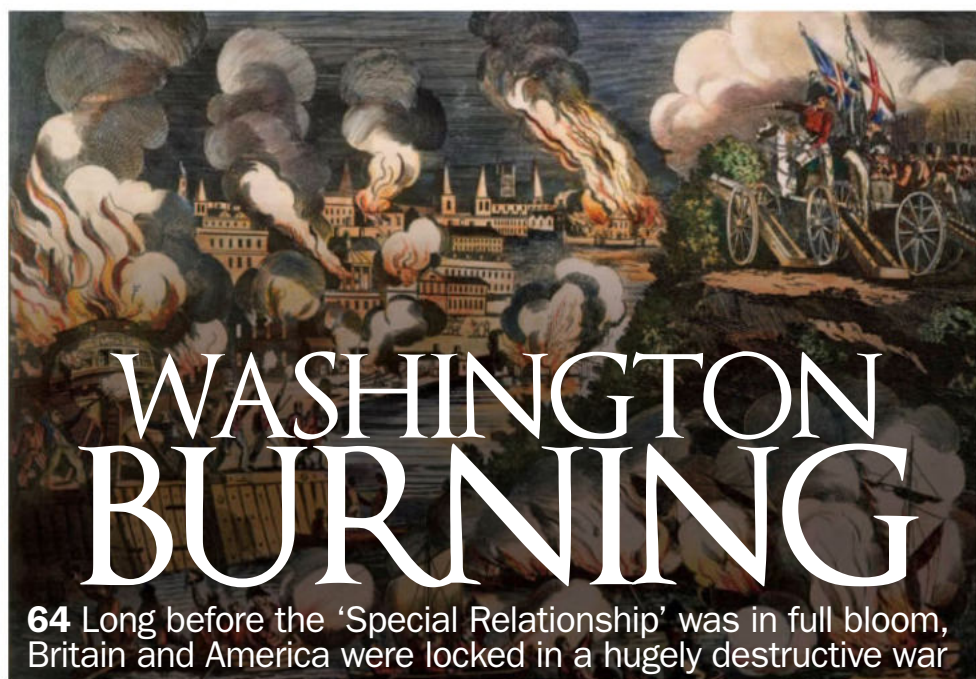
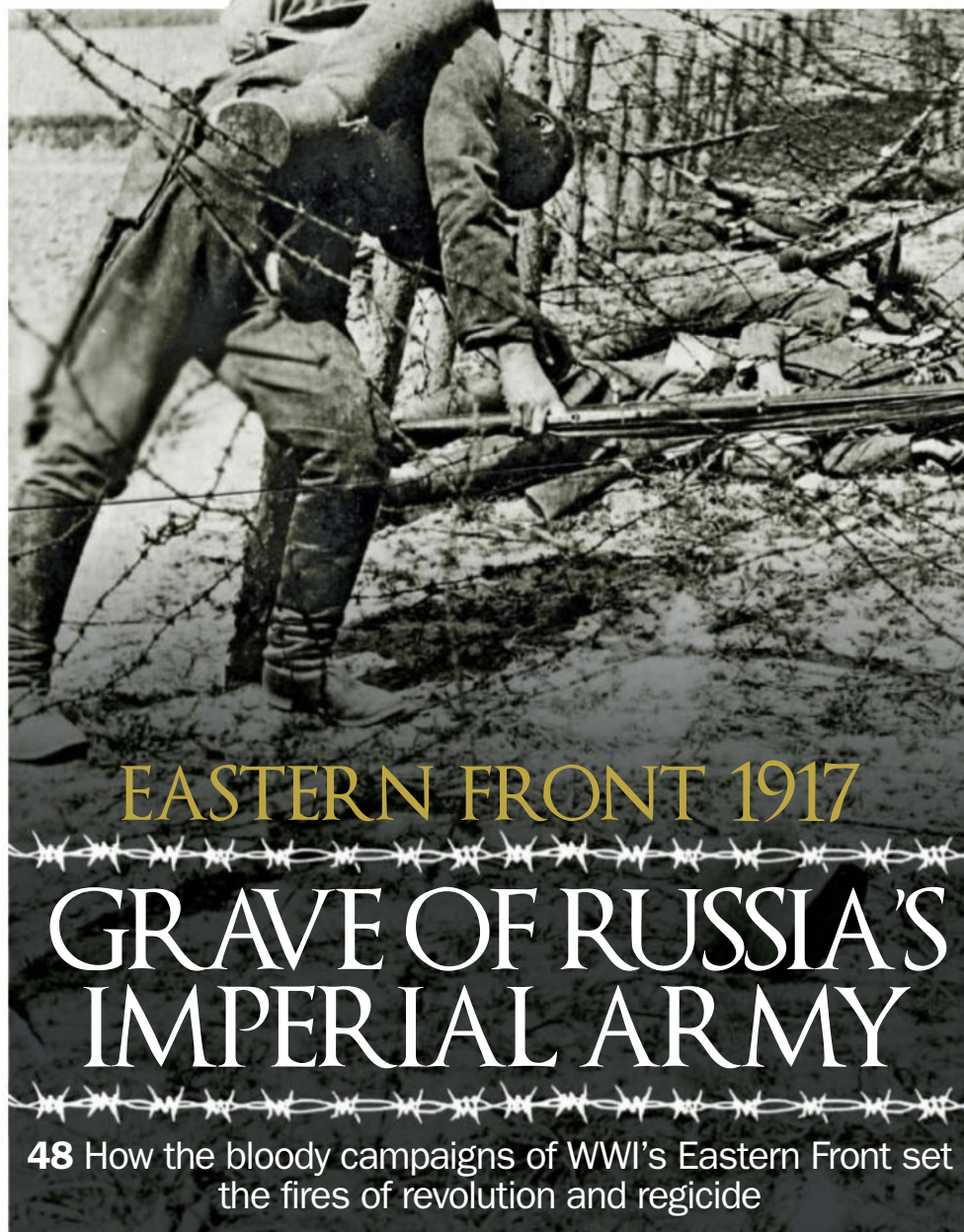
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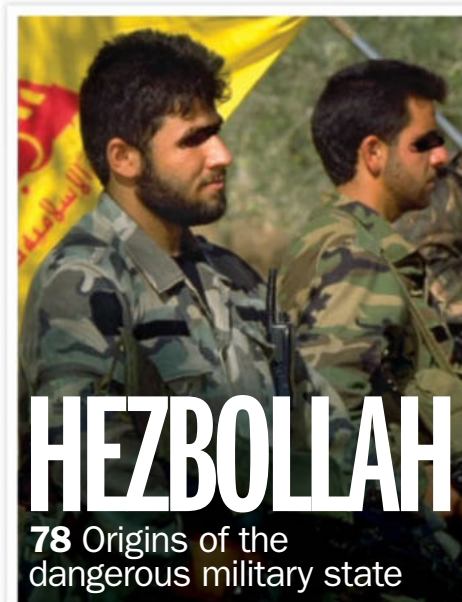


**40** In one of his most famous victories, Napoleon moves against the Ottoman Empire to seize Egypt





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An ornate and iconic piece of headgear





# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## FLAME ON

Taken: c. 1943

British soldiers lie prone as they test Portable No 2 flamethrowers. Nicknamed 'lifebuoys' due to the circular shape of the fuel tanks, these weapons were almost exact copies of the German Flammenwerfers deployed during WWI. Tests continued on the weapon until its Mark 2 iteration was ready for service in 1944.













# **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

## **READY FOR BATTLE**

*Taken: c. March 1940*

Renault UE2 tracked vehicles stand ready in France, just months before the German invasion. The UE2, or chenillette, was designed primary for the transporting of supplies and equipment, with the capacity for a weapon to be mounted onto the hull. At the time this was the most numerous armoured vehicle in French service.





# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## BATTLE OF ZORNDORF

*Painted: 1904*

Carl Röchling's certainly dramatic but embellished painting depicts Frederick the Great of Prussia personally leading his men against their Russian enemy under Count Wilhelm von Fermor, on 25 August 1758. In the event the clash was an inconclusive bloodbath of the Seven Years War, leaving both sides bruised and triumphant.











## **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

### **A ROYAL INSPECTION**

*Taken: 11 June, 1947*

Princess Elizabeth inspects a guard of the Honourable Artillery Company, while on her way to accept the Freedom of the City of London at the capital's Guildhall. This was the first public event the princess took part in unattended, taking place just five months prior to her marriage to Philip Mountbatten.







# TIMELINE OF THE... ITALIAN WARS

## KING LOUIS XII'S WAR

Louis XII invaded and occupied Milan in 1499 and expelled its duke. Afterwards, the French were defeated at Cerignola and Garigliano and were expelled from Naples.

Between 1494-1559, Italy became Europe's battleground as the Habsburg Empire and France jostled to dominate the peninsula and by extension, the whole continent

1494-95

## KING CHARLES VIII'S WAR

Charles VIII of France invaded Italy with 25,000 men to claim the Kingdom of Naples, but an alliance known as the League of Venice forced him to return to French territory.

*Left: French troops under Charles VIII entering Florence, 17 November 1494. Many European states united against French aggression in Italy*



1499-1504

## WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF CAMBRAI

In three separate conflicts, papal concerns about Venetian expansion led to a continental alliance against Venice, which then collapsed. Subsequent fighting led to Swiss successes and varying French fortunes.



1508-16

## FIRST HABSBURG-VALOIS WAR

A fierce rivalry between Francis I of France and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V over continental dominance, particularly in Italy, led to war. It was a crushing defeat for Francis, who was captured at the Battle of Pavia.



*Left: The Battle of Pavia was one the most decisive of all the Italian Wars, cementing Habsburg supremacy in Italy*

1521-26

*Left: The Battle of Ravenna in 1512 was a bloody French victory, but they failed to secure northern Italy in its aftermath*



Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba finds the body of the Duke of Nemours after the decisive Spanish victory at Cerignola. The clash was one of the first European battles won by gunpowder weapons



Left: Charles V's sack and occupation of Rome inadvertently encouraged Henry VIII to break with the papacy and trigger the English Reformation



## WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF COGNAC

Upon his release, Francis I joined a papal alliance to drive Charles V from Italy. Charles sacked Rome and held the pope as a virtual prisoner while the French forces were defeated on the battlefield.

1526-30

1536-38

1542-46

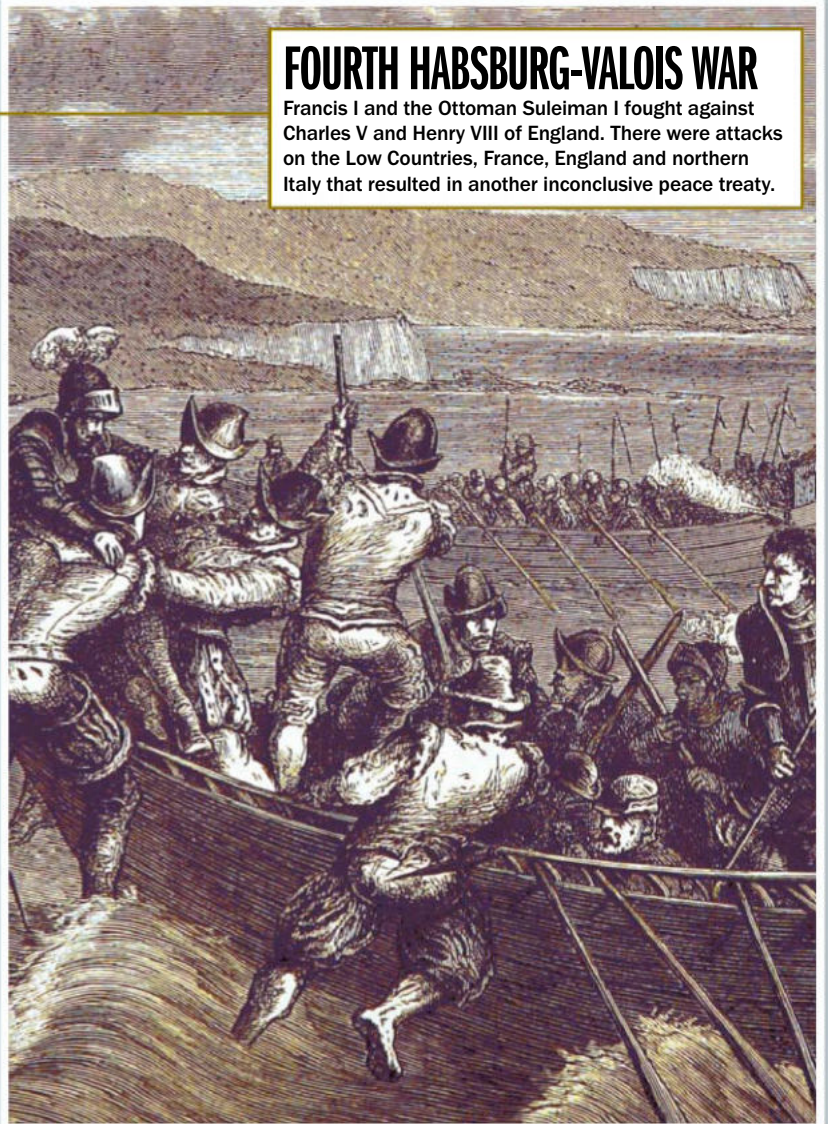
1551-59

## "CHARLES SACKED ROME AND HELD THE POPE AS A VIRTUAL PRISONER WHILE THE FRENCH WERE DEFEATED"

Below: The French led an unsuccessful attack on the Isle of Wight in 1545. The 'Italian Wars' were actually often fought across Western Europe

## FOURTH HABSBURG-VALOIS WAR

Francis I and the Ottoman Suleiman I fought against Charles V and Henry VIII of England. There were attacks on the Low Countries, France, England and northern Italy that resulted in another inconclusive peace treaty.



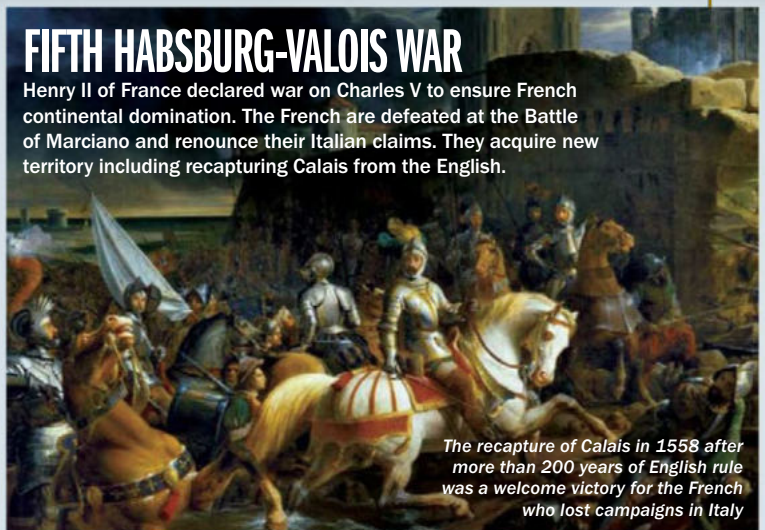
The Truce of Nice between Francis I and Charles V left Turin in French hands but there were no significant changes to the map of Italy

## THIRD HABSBURG-VALOIS WAR

The French invaded Savoy, which prompted Charles V to attempt an unsuccessful assault on southern France. A further French invasion of the Low Countries and Savoy led to an armistice.

## FIFTH HABSBURG-VALOIS WAR

Henry II of France declared war on Charles V to ensure French continental domination. The French are defeated at the Battle of Marignano and renounce their Italian claims. They acquire new territory including recapturing Calais from the English.



The recapture of Calais in 1558 after more than 200 years of English rule was a welcome victory for the French who lost campaigns in Italy



# WAR IN ITALY & BEYOND

1494-1559

For 65 years, the Italian Peninsula and other parts of Europe were scarred by an almost endless succession of battles and sieges

## 1 THE BATTLE OF CERIGNOLA

CERIGNOLA, ITALY 28 APRIL 1503

Cerignola is a Spanish victory against the French and is one of the first European battles to be decided by firearms. French cavalry and Swiss pikemen are repulsed by Spanish arquebusiers in fortified positions.

## 2 THE BATTLE OF GARIGLIANO

GAETA, ITALY 29 DECEMBER 1503

Garigliano shortly follows Cerignola as another Spanish victory although they are greatly assisted by skilful Italian light cavalry. The battle expels the French from southern Italy.

## 3 THE BATTLE OF AGNADELLO

AGNADELLO, ITALY 14 MAY 1509

A French army under Louis XII defeats Venice, which then loses much of its rich territory. Niccolò Machiavelli notes, "In one battle they [the Venetians] lost what they had won in 800 years with so much effort."



Left: The French vastly outnumbered the Venetians at Agnadello and inflicted a massive number of casualties

## 4 THE BATTLE OF RAVENNA

RAVENNA, ITALY 11 APRIL 1512

Ravenna is a French victory against the allied forces of the Holy League, which includes Spain and the Papal States. Artillery plays a major part in deciding the outcome but the French lose their talented commander, Gaston de Foix.

## SIEGE OF CALAIS

1-8 JANUARY 1558 CALAIS, FRANCE

## BATTLE OF RENTY

12 AUGUST 1554 RENTY, FRANCE

## BATTLE OF THE SPURS

16 AUGUST 1513 ENGUINEGATTE, FRANCE

## SIEGE OF BOULOGNE

19 JULY - 18 SEPTEMBER 1544 BOULOGNE, FRANCE

## BATTLE OF THE SOLENT

18-19 JULY 1545 SOLENT CHANNEL, ENGLAND



Above: The Battle of the Solent during the Fourth Hapsburg-Valois War led to the sinking of English ship, the Mary Rose. Its wreck was eventually raised in 1982

"CERIGNOLA IS A SPANISH VICTORY AGAINST THE FRENCH AND IS ONE OF THE FIRST EUROPEAN BATTLES TO BE DECIDED BY FIREARMS"

Below: The death of Gaston de Foix at the Battle of Ravenna as depicted by Ary Scheffer





**“SERVING UNDER THE DUCHY OF MILAN,  
THE PIKEMEN OVERWHELM THE FRENCH  
IN A SURPRISE ATTACK, DESPITE A LACK OF  
CAVALRY OR ARTILLERY”**

## 5 THE BATTLE OF NOVARA

NOVARA, ITALY 6 JUNE 1513

Novara is one of the last victories won by Swiss pikemen. Serving under the Duchy of Milan, the pikemen overwhelm the French in a surprise attack, despite a lack of cavalry or artillery.

## 6 THE BATTLE OF MARIGNANO

MELEGNANO, ITALY 13-14 SEPTEMBER 1515

This French victory restores dominance over the Duchy of Milan. Swiss mercenaries are repelled by heavy artillery barrages in what is probably the high point in Francis I's Italian career.



Above: Swiss and German mercenaries clash in a contemporary depiction of the Battle of Marignano

Below: The alliance formed between the Ottoman Empire and France was unprecedented among Christian and Muslim powers and was considered to be unholy and sacrilegious



## 7 THE SIEGE OF NICE

NICE, SAVOY (MODERN FRANCE) 6-22 AUGUST 1543

A French-Ottoman fleet attacks and sacks the Imperial city of Nice. The assault demonstrates the overstretched resources of Charles V's Habsburg Empire.

## 8 THE BATTLE OF MARCIANO

MARCHIANO DELLA CHIANA, ITALY 2 AUGUST 1554

The Republic of Siena is heavily defeated by Imperial and Florentine forces, despite receiving French support. Siena is carved up between the Holy Roman Empire and Florence.

Images: FreeVectorMaps.com





# BATTLE OF PAVIA

French monarch Francis I faced catastrophe in Lombardy when he was surprised by the forces of the Holy Roman Empire

**A**fter suffering a terrible defeat at the Battle of Bicocca in 1522, King Francis I of France found safety in the territory of his ally, Venice. He formed new plans to maintain his holdings in Italy but suffered further setbacks in 1523 with the loss of Genoa and his possessions around Milan.

The Venetians, seeing Francis struggling, took this opportunity to make a separate peace with Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Once back in France, the king raised another army to invade Italy, but the treason of the Constable Bourbon forced him to remain behind to quell possible uprisings. In 1524, his army, under the command of another, was crushed.

In October 1524, Francis tried again. He marched another army through the Alps intending to seize Milan, which was taken later that month after a harrowing trek. The Imperials – weakened by plague – gave up the city without a fight, and retreated to Pavia. Francis followed them there and on 28 October laid siege to the fortification.

The siege dragged on through the brutal winter until 24 February 1525. Many of Francis's men froze, fell ill or deserted. Inside Pavia, the Imperial garrison commander, Antonia de Leyva, had it only a little better. His 9,000 men were warm but hungry. They also were not being paid and were growing disgruntled.

An Imperial relief force under Charles de Lannoy, Viceroy of Naples, and Fernando, Marquis of Pescara, arrived at Pavia and established its own earthworks beside those of the French. Money troubles caused problems for the Imperials, as their mercenary landsknechts had not received their pay in months. Some were deserting, but worse was in store for Francis. The Black Band, a group of Italian mercenaries, mostly melted away when their commander, Giovanni de Medici, was wounded in the foot by a musket ball.

A greater injury came when 6,000 Swiss mercenaries from the Grisons deserted French service once news arrived that the Milanese had captured a castle at Chiavenna and were threatening the borders of their homeland. They

were immediately recalled to Switzerland and their departure astounded the French – their pay was up-to-date. Nonetheless, no one could convince the Swiss to stay.

Francis's army had shrunk by about 8,000 men in just three days, leaving him with around 20,000 troops. Lannoy and Pescara, seeing the odds swing somewhat in their favour (they had some 20,000 soldiers themselves) decided to attack. On the rainy night of 23-24 February, Imperial artillery opened up on the French.

Most of the Imperial army made an end run around the French entrenchments outside Pavia, with just a handful of troops left behind in their own lines to keep up the façade that the army had remained in place. The Imperials, marching in five divisions, moved north, crossed the Vernacula about three kilometres upstream of French lines and then wheeled around and broke through the north-eastern corner of the walls of the Park of Mirabello, a hunting palace a little to the north of Pavia. There was no one watching over this section of the walls and so the Imperials surged through the breach.

Francis was caught completely off guard by the appearance of an enemy army deploying into a battle line close by his headquarters beneath the walls of Pavia. He hurriedly got his own troops together and launched a cavalry charge with his gendarmes against the cavalry in the centre of the Imperial line.

Francis's mounted gendarmes punched a hole in the Imperial line, but the rest of it held firm under two separate attacks from French infantry. One of these attacks was delivered by the remaining Swiss mercenaries, who were a pale shadow of the matchless fighters they once had been. Under fire from Imperial arquebusiers, they had no stomach to press home the charge, left the field and marched off down the road towards Milan. The reputation of the Swiss for invincible aggressiveness ended.

Imperial landsknechts gave a much better account of themselves, and smashed the 4,000 landsknechts who had taken service with France in defiance of the emperor's own ban. They crushed the remaining French infantry next, and Francis found himself alone with just his knightly gendarmes about him. They were pulverized, with Francis's horse killed beneath him. Francis fought on, wounded, and would have been slain had Lannoy not come up and protected him from his own troops.

Francis was taken captive and imprisoned by the Imperials. Some 10,000 French met their end outside the walls of Pavia, compared to just 700 Imperials, and Francis would secure his freedom only after signing a humiliating peace treaty with the empire.

## THE DECLINE OF THE SWISS

**FOR YEARS, THE SWISS WERE THE MOST FEARED INFANTRY IN EUROPE, BUT THEIR POOR PERFORMANCE AT BOCOCCA MEANT THEY NEVER REGAINED THEIR REPUTATION**

In the Burgundian Wars of the 1470s, Swiss infantry gained a preeminent reputation as Europe's most skilled and aggressive foot soldiers. For decades afterwards, they were eagerly sought after by the Valois kings of France to stiffen their ranks of infantrymen.

Unfortunately, the democratic, egalitarian Swiss had a bothersome habit of packing their bags and leaving if they went unpaid for too long. They felt it was their right to go home if the terms of their contract were not being met. Yet generals desired their services because of their unrivalled quality.

The performance of the Swiss mercenaries at Pavia left much to be desired, to put it mildly. Some 6,000 deserted French colours before the battle even began. Those that remained behind at Pavia were not of the same quality as those who had fought for King Francis I in earlier battles.

The Battle of Bicocca in 1522 had been a disaster for the Swiss, where they had suffered devastating losses under murderous fire from Spanish arquebusiers. After Bicocca, the Swiss had lost much of their old swagger, and other armies had seen clearly that they might be checked, and even repulsed. At Pavia, unpaid and suffering from low morale, the Swiss lost heart, refused to stay in the fight and their mystique largely evaporated.

*Below: In a camp near Bicocca, Swiss soldiers argue with the Marshal of France over pay*



Images: Alamy, Getty

**“FRANCIS FOUGHT ON, WOUNDED, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN SLAIN HAD LANNOY NOT COME UP AND PROTECTED HIM FROM HIS OWN TROOPS”**



Victory at Pavia cemented Habsburg  
supremacy in Italy

**"SOME 10,000 FRENCH HAD MET THEIR  
END OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF PAVIA,  
COMPARED TO JUST 700 IMPERIALS"**





# HEAD TO HEAD

While the German Landsknechts were formed as a mirror image of the much-admired Swiss mercenaries, one proved to be more steadfast

## GERMAN LANDSKNECHTS

LOYALTY: HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE YEARS IN OPERATION: 1486 – c.1590

### WEAPONS

Most Landsknechts carried a pike, between four and five metres long. About ten per cent carried matchlock arquebuses and these screened the pikemen. Some would wield two-handed swords, that they used to cut through enemy pikes.

### TACTICS

The Landsknechts fought in large pike squares with two-handed swordsmen in the front. They tended to be more defensive than the Swiss because of their reliance on their arquebusiers.

### LOYALTY

Though mercenaries, most Landsknechts remained in service to the Holy Roman Emperor even when owed money, unlike the Swiss who tended to quickly desert an employer when unpaid.

## A MERCENARY'S WAGE

Emperor Maximilian I of the Holy Roman Empire raised the first Landsknechts in 1486 so that he would have his own infantry that could fight as well as the vaunted Swiss mercenaries. When not fighting on behalf of the emperor, the Landsknechts were permitted to take service with other employers. Since they were mercenaries, they demanded to be paid, and they rioted after the Battle of Pavia for their back pay. Despite this, they tended to be more reliable than the Swiss when it came to walking off the job when their pay fell into arrears.

### REPUTATION

Though generally not as renowned as the Swiss mercenaries, by the time of the Battle of Pavia in 1525, the Landsknechts had closed any gap in perceived quality and were arguably the better soldiers.

### ARMOUR

Landsknechts bought their own armour, and supplemented this with whatever they could collect. Most Landsknechts would have worn a grab bag of pieces taken from different suits.

### TOTAL



Right: The Landsknecht were encouraged to dress flamboyantly by Emperor Maximilian I





Left: Swiss mercenaries and their baggage train on the march near the end of the Italian Wars



## A FIERCE REPUTATION

The Swiss had earned their reputation as the finest mercenaries during the Burgundian Wars of 1474-77. Duke Charles the Bold's attempt to establish his own empire of Burgundy came to nought when the Swiss pikemen stopped him cold at the Battles of Morat (1476) and Nancy (1477). The kings of France then took to hiring them to fight in their own armies. The ascendancy of the Swiss foot soldier showed that the day of the knight was nearly over. Heavy losses in the Italian Wars at Marignano and Bicocca would badly dent the Swiss reputation for invincibility.

## SWISS MERCENARY

LOYALTY: FRANCE YEARS IN OPERATION: 1470 – c.1590

### WEAPONS

The primary Swiss weapon was a five-metre-long pike. One in ten soldiers might bear an arquebus firearm and fight as a skirmisher. Some carried halberds while others bore enormous two-handed swords.

### TACTICS

The Swiss pikemen fought in large blocks up to 24 ranks in depth. The rear ranks plugged holes in the line as they appeared. The Swiss tended to be very aggressive in action and very willing to be on the attack.

### LOYALTY

Mercenaries fought for money, and the Swiss had a habit of walking off when not paid. Morale among the Swiss suffered because of irregular pay.

### REPUTATION

The Swiss had been famed as some of the best mercenary soldiers across Europe for decades, but their reputation suffered after they took huge losses at the Battles of Marignano in 1515 and Bicocca in 1522.

### ARMOUR

On campaign, Swiss troops would be armoured according to their means, or whatever they could find. The better-protected soldiers would fight in the front ranks, where the fighting was fierce.

### TOTAL



**“THE SWISS HAD EARNED THEIR REPUTATION AS THE FINEST MERCENARIES DURING THE BURGUNDIAN WARS OF 1474-77”**

Illustrations: Jean-Michel Gilard / The Art Agency



# DID WALLS HELP TO BUILD THE EUROPE OF NATIONS?

In the 15th century, gunpowder artillery made short work of Medieval walls, but Italian architects soon devised new and ingenious methods of foiling besiegers

**D**uring the Middle Ages, capturing a castle or fortified city was very difficult. Methods of besieging a strong place were not very effective, and sieges were therefore very long. The invasion of Italy by King Charles VIII of France seemed to overturn this.

Invading the peninsula in 1494, the king had conquered the Kingdom of Naples by 1495. Yet the subsequent history of Europe during the Italian Wars and afterwards was generally not one of swift strikes and daring ripostes, but of long, grinding sieges punctuated, only occasionally, by a battle in the field.

Charles VIII's speedy conquest was helped by the prevalence of Medieval fortifications in Italy. The walls of castles and cities there, as elsewhere in Europe, had been constructed to prevent enemies from climbing over them, and so had been built very high but very thin; they did not need to be thick to do their job.

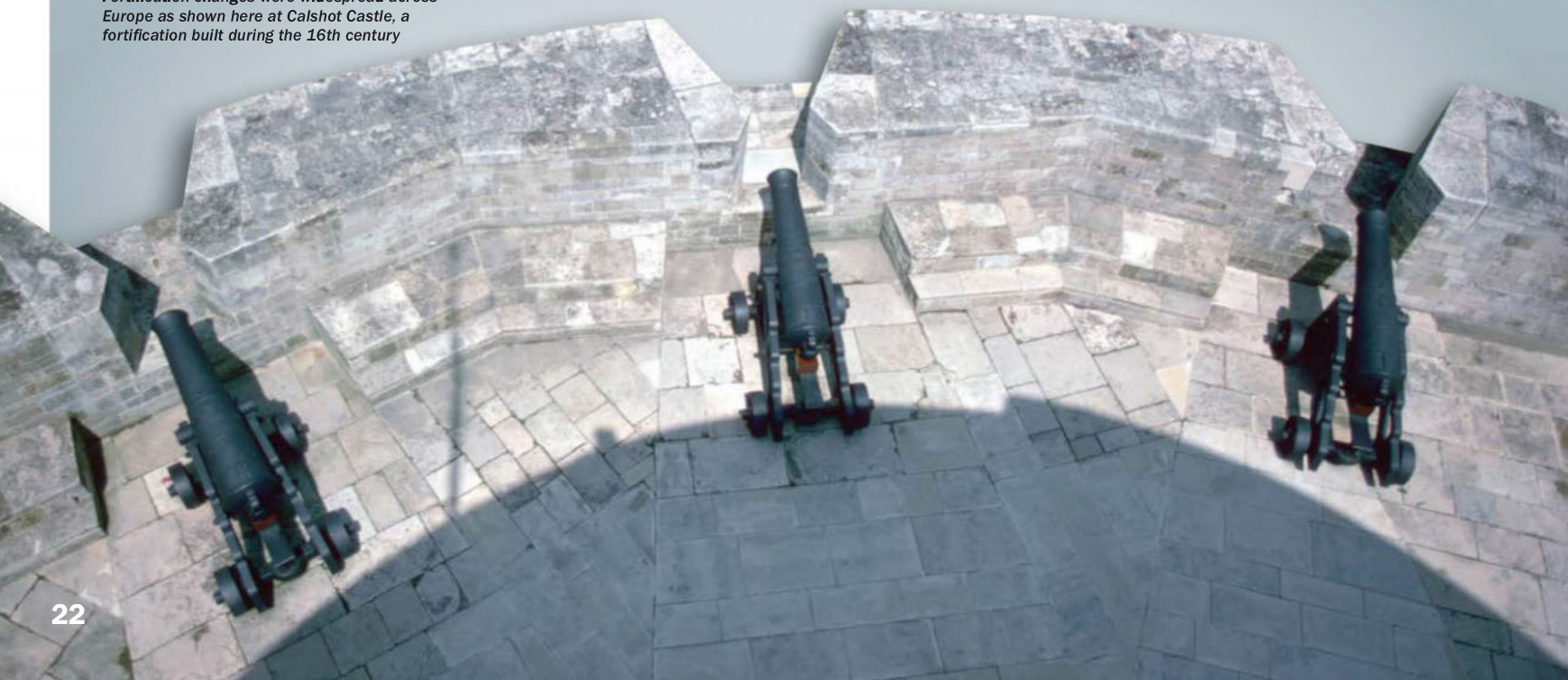
The advent of artillery changed this dynamic. Guns scored successes against fortifications in the 15th century, but they tended to be big, heavy and slow to get into place. Charles's artillery train of some 40 guns was revolutionary in that they were, for their day, very mobile. The king could rapidly bring his cannon into action and Naples was his.

The sudden fall of Naples was a shock to all Italians. In 1519, Niccolo Machiavelli wrote of Charles's achievement that, "...today no wall exists that artillery cannot destroy in a few days." Machiavelli's fellow Florentine, the diplomat Francesco Guicciardini, was in awe of the French artillery. "[The guns] were placed against the walls of a town with such speed, and the balls flew so quick, that as much execution was done in a few hours as formerly in Italy in a like number of days."

Yet a solution to the problem of artillery was already taking shape. Witnessing the

*Fortification changes were widespread across Europe as shown here at Calshot Castle, a fortification built during the 16th century*

*The Siege of Siena saw the city state hold out for 18 months against Spanish forces*







destructive power of the new mobile artillery, and the inadequacy of old-fashioned and plainly obsolete Medieval walls, Italian military engineers scrambled to devise appropriate counters – some quite simple. They noted that dense earthworks placed behind walls could absorb the impacts of cannon shot very well. Ditches dug in front of the walls also made approaching them troublesome, but it was rethinking the nature of the wall itself that restored the balance between offence and defence in sieges. Instead of making walls that were high and thin, walls built in the 16th century were now low and thick, all the better to withstand artillery fire.

Walls also gained other features, perhaps most notably the angle bastio – a four-sided structure that projected outwards from the wall – which made its first appearance in 1501. Unlike the round towers that had once studded Medieval fortress walls, angle bastions left no ‘dead’ ground in which attackers might find shelter from defensive fire. Each bastion

## “CHARLES’S ARTILLERY TRAIN OF SOME 40 GUNS WAS REVOLUTIONARY IN THAT THEY WERE, FOR THEIR DAY, VERY MOBILE”

supported its neighbours and besiegers getting too close were subject to withering fire from their flanks. Furthermore, the artillery placed in the bastions was largely sheltered from attack by besieging artillery. Angled bastions would become the predominant form of military architecture in Italy as the century progressed.

The political and military impact of this new design would be profound. Italian military architects fanned out across Europe to build fortifications in the modern style, known as the *trace italienne*. Cities on the continent became enclosed by these much stronger defensive schemes over the next decades. Taking a fortified place was once again extremely difficult and time consuming. Yet a wise general could not countenance leaving such a stronghold in his rear to threaten his lines of

communication. Long sieges became the norm once again in European warfare, and they made conquering territory excruciatingly hard.

The Spanish would learn, to their great cost, that Dutch rebels sitting behind such state-of-the-art fortifications were nearly impossible to overcome. The Dutch would win their independence from the Habsburgs in large measure because of their ability to withstand Spanish sieges. Large-scale conquests or changes in borders became almost unthinkable once Europe was dotted with these heavily protected cities and other strongholds. The overall effect of the *trace italienne* was to allow the boundaries of Europe’s realms to harden to the point where they could then develop into the nation-states that they are today.



# IN THE RANKS

The Italian Wars saw several types of soldiers hold prominence in the struggle for the peninsula

**T**he Italian Wars experienced the crossover from the Medieval way of war to one that incorporated gunpowder weaponry on a large scale.

There were holdovers from the Middle Ages – the French gendarme was still much like his Medieval forebear – but there were also new troop types, such as the pistol-wielding reiter and the matchlock arquebusier. The mercenary condottieri that had long dominated war in Renaissance Italy would prove to be no match for the modern soldiers from elsewhere in Europe.

## SPANISH INFANTRYMAN

**THE SPANISH INFANTRYMAN WOULD BECOME THE FOREMOST SOLDIER OF THE ITALIAN WARS, AND THE BACKBONE OF HABSBURG ARMIES FOR GENERATIONS TO COME**

Hardened in battle with the Moors in Spain, Spanish infantry underwent further changes in the crucible of the Italian Wars.

Formed into companies of roughly 200 pikemen, 200 sword-and-buckler men and 100 arquebusiers, Spanish footsoldiers fought as disciplined combined-arms teams and were instrumental in the Imperial victories at Bicocca and Pavia.

Pikemen would engage opponents frontally while the sword-and-buckler men wormed their way forward through enemy pikes. Arquebusiers screened them both with their fire.

By the end of the Italian Wars, the Spanish were regarded as the best, most professional infantry in Europe, a position they would hold for the rest of the century.

*Right: A Spanish arquebusier stands proudly with his weapon. These troops would have provided cover fire for the rest of his unit*

*Right: An unnamed Condottiere during the Italian Wars, painted by Lord Leighton*

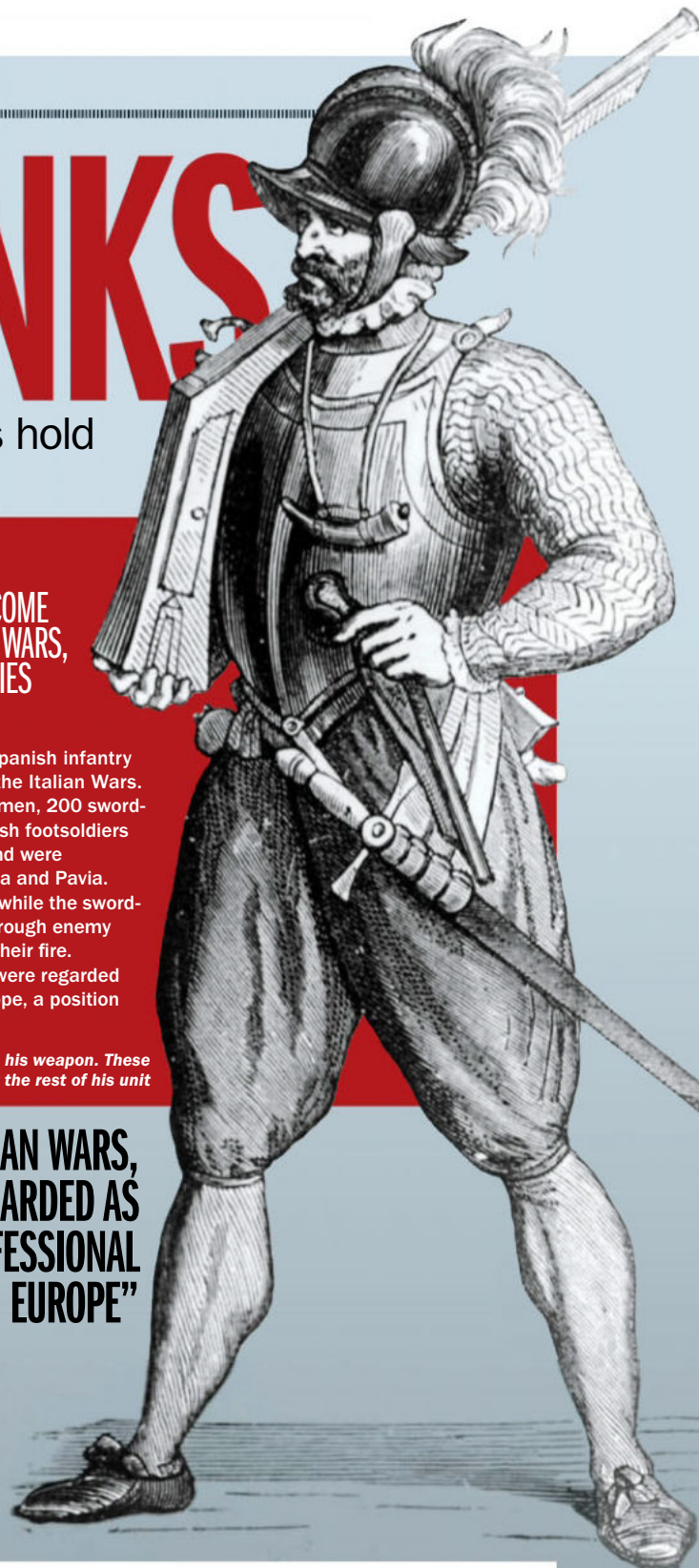
**“BY THE END OF THE ITALIAN WARS, THE SPANISH WERE REGARDED AS THE BEST, MOST PROFESSIONAL INFANTRY IN EUROPE”**

## ITALIAN CONDOTTIERE

**THE MERCENARY CONDOTTIERI HAD LONG DOMINATED ITALIAN WARFARE, BUT WERE OVERWHELMED BY LARGE ARMIES ARRIVING FROM BEYOND THE ALPS**

The condottieri, so named for the contracts under which they fought, were the primary military forces of the cities of Renaissance Italy and hired themselves out to whoever would pay them. They had relatively little impact during the Italian Wars.

Though scorned by Machiavelli, the condottieri did not lack skill or courage. Rather, it was the appearance of big armies with gunpowder weaponry from the north that altered the nature of warfare, and the condottieri's place in it dwindled.







The gendarme stand out from the rest of the troops due to their mounts and ornate armour

**FRENCH GENDARME**  
THE NOBILITY OF FRANCE RODE TO WAR MUCH AS THEY HAD IN THE MIDDLE AGES, AS PROUD KNIGHTS ON HORSEBACK

The gendarme of France, the mounted man-at-arms, was a declining but still-potent force on the battlefield of the Italian Wars. Clad in all-enclosing steel armour and armed with lance, sword and mace, the gendarme astride his armoured warhorse was a formidable opponent. Gendarmes would ride into battle in single line so as to allow for the widest employment of their lances.

**“ARMED WITH LANCE, SWORD AND MACE, THE GENDARME ASTRIDE HIS ARMoured WARHORSE WAS A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT”**

**GERMAN REITER**  
THE MOUNTED PISTOLEER WAS A MARRIAGE OF MOBILITY AND FIREPOWER ON THE BATTLEFIELD WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE WHEEL-LOCK PISTOL

By the beginning of the 16th century, the gunpowder firearm was slowly beginning to change the nature of war in Europe.

The matchlock arquebus, a primitive firearm, had mostly superseded the bow and crossbow among infantry. Yet it was a cumbersome weapon to wield while on horseback. Instead, reiter cavalry carried the pistol, a small weapon that could be fired with just one hand. Unlike the larger arquebus, the pistol had no burning match to contend with but fired by means of a wheel-lock, which could produce sparks by striking

a small piece of pyrite. Several such weapons could be stowed, ready-to-fire, on one's person. In Germany, such horse pistoleers were known as reiters, and they were highly sought after.

In battle, their tactics involved performing the caracole, in which the reiters would ride up to an enemy formation of pikemen, discharge their pistols, and then swerve away to ride to the rear of their formation to reload. The reiters in the rank behind them would do the same, and so on, until it was again the turn of the first rank to go fire once more. The caracole would be performed until the enemy pikemen had been worn down by fire and their ranks disordered, into which cavalry would then make a charge.

Left: A German style reiter armed with their trademark pistol





# HEROES & COMMANDERS

From mighty emperors & chivalrous knights to cunning pirates, the battles for dominance in Italy spawned talented warriors of every description

## CHARLES V

THE EMPEROR WAS DESCRIBED AS AN 'IRON HAND IN A VELVET GLOVE'

**YEARS: 1500-58 COUNTRY: HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE, SPANISH EMPIRE AND HABSBURG NETHERLANDS**

Born in Ghent, Charles's Habsburg ancestry meant that he was heir to a huge dynastic inheritance. From 1519, he was the Holy Roman Emperor, King of Spain (including the vast Spanish colonies in the Americas), Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy and Lord of the Netherlands. These huge personal dominions meant that Europe was almost on the brink of a universal monarchy and Charles's imperial title meant that he was the king of Germany and much of northern Italy too.

The emperor's powerful position in the peninsula meant that Francis I of France felt threatened and literally surrounded by Habsburg dominance, and this caused the majority of conflicts during the Italian Wars.

Charles spent much of his military career fighting to preserve or expand his dominions

and was a keen soldier. He saw himself as a Catholic crusader against expanding forces such as the external threat of the Ottoman Empire and the internal growth of Protestantism. However, his main rival was arguably Francis I of France who fought him for decades in Italy from 1521. Charles frequently had the upper hand and he defeated and captured Francis at the Battle of Pavia, on his 25th birthday. This crushing victory did not deter Francis, however, who immediately re-declared war upon his release.

The French still suffered a series of defeats because Charles built new fortifications around major Italian cities, but he was not just a defensive emperor and from 1536, he went on the offensive.

His fourth 'Italian' war actually took place in northern France, where Imperial forces successfully besieged Saint-Dizier and threatened Paris. Charles fought his final Italian War against Francis's heir, Henry II, in the 1550s but this time he lost Metz, Toul and Verdun. Exhausted by years of campaigning, Charles willingly abdicated and retired to a Spanish monastery.

*Right: Charles's personal bravery was recorded during a siege when he refused to remain safely in the rear stating, "Name me an emperor who was ever struck by a cannon ball?"*



## JULIUS II

THE BELLIGERENT PONTIFF KNOWN AS 'THE WARRIOR POPE'

**YEARS: 1443-1513 COUNTRY: PAPAL STATES**

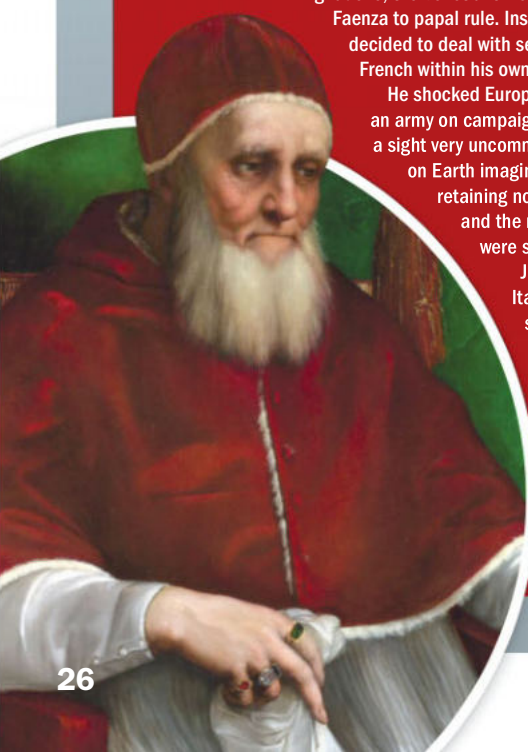
The Papal States owned significant territory in Italy and Julius sought to extend the papacy's power and went to war with Venice. After suffering defeat at the Battle of Agnadello, the Venetians were forced to return Rimini and

Faenza to papal rule. Inspired by his success, Julius then decided to deal with semi-independent despots and the French within his own territory.

He shocked Europe by wearing armour and leading an army on campaign. A contemporary wrote, "It was a sight very uncommon to behold, the vicar of Christ on Earth imagining a war among Christians and retaining nothing of the Pontiff but the name and the robes." Both Bologna and Mirandola were subsequently conquered.

Julius then attempted to free all of Italy from French rule and created a short-lived 'holy league' of nations, including Spain, England and the Holy Roman Empire, to fight them from 1510 until his death in 1513.

*Left: Pope Julius II. His warlike actions prompted the humanist Desiderius Erasmus to ask, "What association is there between the cross and the sword?"*



## FRANCIS I

THE AMBITIOUS BUT FOOLHARDY KING OF FRANCE

**YEARS: 1494-1547 COUNTRY: FRANCE**

Francis fought almost endless wars in Italy in an attempt to assert French continental power. He viewed fighting in the peninsula not just as a way of securing his borders against Habsburg dominance, but also to prove himself as a warrior. He was initially highly successful and during his first invasion of Italy between 1515-16, he decisively defeated the Swiss at the Battle of Marignano and took control of the Duchy of Milan.

After 1521, Francis's fortunes changed when Charles V entered the wars. The king proved to be a mediocre leader and lost the Battle of Pavia in 1525, which was one of the greatest French defeats since the Hundred Years' War. Despite fighting bravely, Francis was

captured and imprisoned in Madrid. He wrote to his mother, "Nothing remains to me but honour and life." Upon his release, he fought more wars against Charles without success but upon his death, he did possess Savoy and Piedmont.

*Right: Francis I has sometimes been described as the king of the Renaissance and it is arguable that he was a greater patron of the arts than a soldier*





## GASTON DE FOIX

THE YOUTHFUL 'THUNDERBOLT OF ITALY'

**YEARS: 1489-1512 COUNTRY: FRANCE**

As Duke of Nemours, de Foix was a nephew of Louis XII of France and came from a military family. He arrived in Italy as a new commander during the War of the League of Cambrai at the age of only 21 and reinvigorated the French war effort against the Holy League.

As governor of Milan, he repelled a Swiss attack on the city and then turned his attention to Venetian, Papal and Spanish forces. He first lifted the Siege of Bologna by catching the besiegers by surprise and forcing them to flee. Shortly afterwards, in February 1512, de Foix defeated a Venetian army at Isola della Scala and then stormed Brescia.

His greatest victory came at the Battle of Ravenna in April 1512, when he defeated a combined Spanish-Papal force by attacking them in the rear with a surprise artillery bombardment. Unfortunately for the French, de Foix was killed towards the end of the battle – he was aged just 22.

*Right: De Foix's premature death deprived the French of a popular commander and it's possible the course of the Italian Wars would have been different had he lived*



**"IN FEBRUARY 1512, DE FOIX DEFEATED A VENETIAN ARMY AT ISOLA DELLA SCALA AND THEN STORMED BRESCIA"**

*Left: Bayard was known for his chivalrous behaviour and had no interest in plunder, which was almost unique for commanders of the period*

## PIERRE TERRAIL, SEIGNEUR DE BAYARD

'THE KNIGHT WITHOUT FEAR AND BEYOND REPROACH'

**YEARS: 1473-1524 COUNTRY: FRANCE**

Bayard came from a dynasty where most of its heads had died in battle for the previous two centuries and he would follow in their footsteps. After being knighted by Charles VIII, Bayard earned his chivalrous reputation by taking part in tournaments between enemy lines during King Louis XII's war. At the Battle of Garigliano in 1503, he reputedly defended a bridge single-handed against 200 Spaniards, which greatly impressed many of his enemies.

In 1512, he ignored his own wounds to take part in the Battle of Ravenna and when the English captured him during the Battle of the Spurs, they released him without ransom in recognition of his bravery. Bayard's luck eventually ran out when he was mortally wounded by an arquebus ball while covering a retreat against Imperial troops. His enemies claimed his body but returned it to France as a sign of respect.



## HAYREDDIN BARBAROSSA

THE OTTOMAN ADMIRAL WHO INTERVENED IN THE ITALIAN WARS

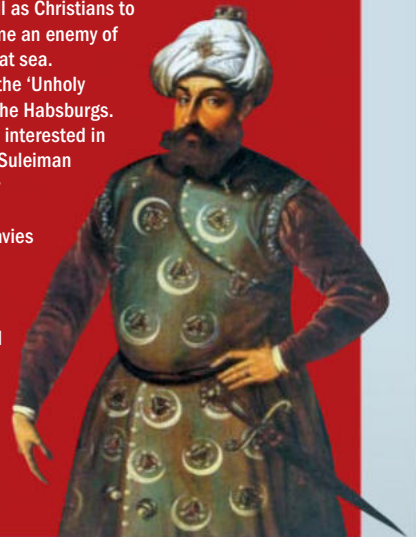
**YEARS: C.1478-1546 COUNTRY: OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

Barbarossa was a Barbary pirate turned admiral who helped to incorporate Algeria and Tunisia into the Ottoman Empire. His personal fleet constantly attacked coastal Spain, France and Italy and took loot as well as Christians to be sold as slaves. This caused him to become an enemy of Charles V, who frequently clashed with him at sea.

By the early 1540s, France had entered the 'Unholy Alliance' with the Ottoman Empire against the Habsburgs. Although unprecedented, both powers were interested in weakening Imperial dominance and Sultan Suleiman I put 110 galleys at France's disposal under Barbarossa's command.

Combined with a French fleet, the two navies laid siege to Nice in 1543. The operation was a success, although the French had to prevent the Ottomans from looting the city. Barbarossa then bombarded Barcelona and returned to Istanbul, sacking many cities en route. His fleet only stood down when Suleiman and Charles V signed a truce.

*Right: The Ottoman involvement in the Italian Wars was a sign that the conflicts had a truly international dimension*



## GONZALO FERNÁNDEZ DE CÓRDOBA

THE PIONEERING 'FATHER OF FIREARMS' IN EUROPE

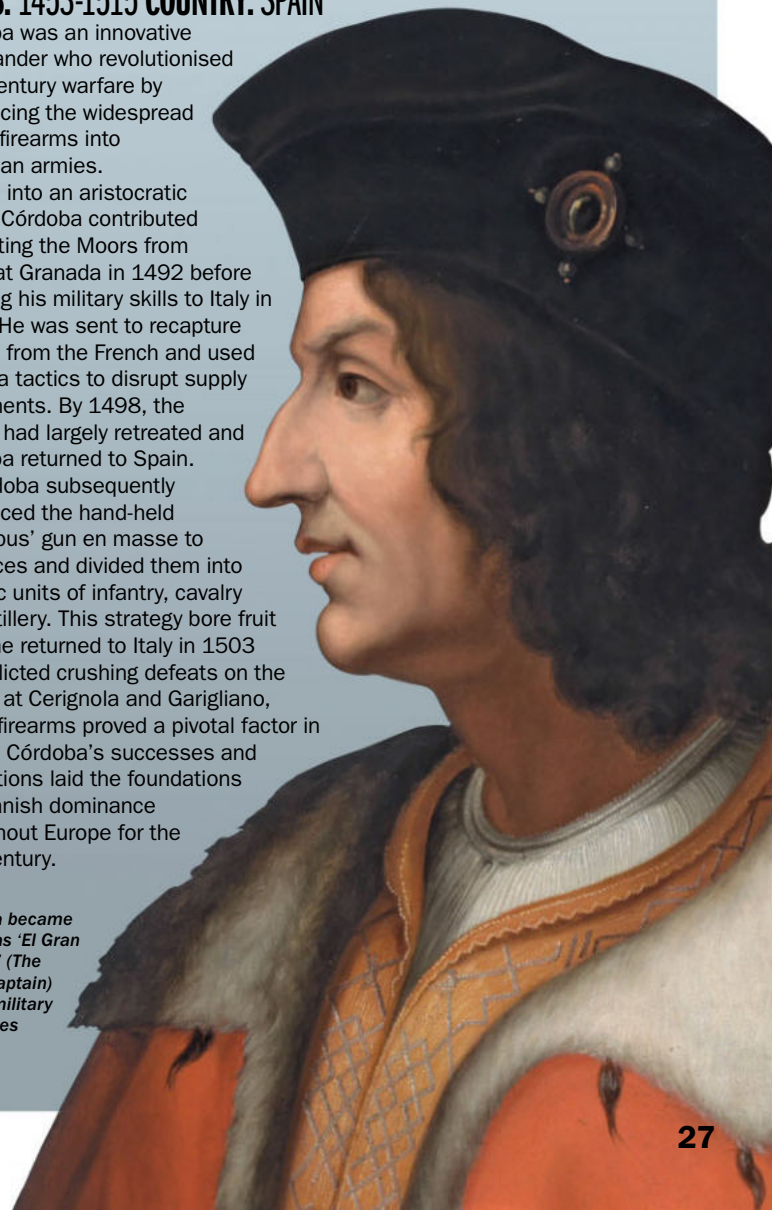
**YEARS: 1453-1515 COUNTRY: SPAIN**

Córdoba was an innovative commander who revolutionised 16th-century warfare by introducing the widespread use of firearms into European armies.

Born into an aristocratic family, Córdoba contributed to ejecting the Moors from Spain at Granada in 1492 before applying his military skills to Italy in 1495. He was sent to recapture Naples from the French and used guerrilla tactics to disrupt supply movements. By 1498, the French had largely retreated and Córdoba returned to Spain.

Córdoba subsequently introduced the hand-held 'arquebus' gun en masse to his forces and divided them into specific units of infantry, cavalry and artillery. This strategy bore fruit when he returned to Italy in 1503 and inflicted crushing defeats on the French at Cerignola and Garigliano, where firearms proved a pivotal factor in victory. Córdoba's successes and innovations laid the foundations for Spanish dominance throughout Europe for the next century.

*Córdoba became known as 'El Gran Capitán' (The Great Captain) for his military successes in Italy*





“THE WORST DISASTER IN BRITISH HISTORY”

# THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

WORDS TOM GARNER

The sun began to set on the British Empire in 1942 with a humiliating defeat where tens of thousands of Allied soldiers became prisoners of the Imperial Japanese Army. Among them was 21-year-old Bob Hucklesby

**O**n 11 February 1942, American journalist Yates McDaniel wrote a final report to his newspaper from a formerly grand outpost in the Far East: “The sky over Singapore is black with the smoke of a dozen huge fires this morning as I write my last message from this once beautiful, prosperous and peaceful city. The roar and crash of cannonade and the bursting bombs that are shaking my typewriter and my hands, which are wet with perspiration, tell me that the war that started nine weeks ago, 645 kilometres away, is today in the outskirts of this shaken bastion of empire.”

McDaniel would escape the carnage that overwhelmed Singapore, but for many others the devastating assault on this vital part of the

British Empire meant death or years of captivity and trauma.

The fall of Singapore was a triumph for Japan and was almost certainly Britain’s gravest setback in WWII. More than 80,000 Allied prisoners were captured in a mass surrender against a numerically inferior Japanese force. A shocked Winston Churchill described the humiliation as, “...the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history.”

The road that led to these momentous events was characterised by the formidable fighting ability and tactics of the Japanese, together with entrenched British complacency and incompetence. The end result would be a hammer blow to European imperialism and a brutality on the part of the Japanese that equalled the craven behaviour of their Nazi allies.

## ‘The Gibraltar of the East’

Located at the southern end of the Malay Peninsula, the island of Singapore had been a British Crown colony since 1867. It was considered a vital part of the British Empire and its major military base was thought to be impregnable. It was known as the ‘Gibraltar of the East’ or ‘the key to the Pacific’, and the British had spent 20 years building a highly expensive naval base. When it was completed in 1938, it had cost £60 million (£2 billion today) and was protected by 38-centimetre guns. However, the idea that Singapore was an ‘island fortress’ was false, – only the south was heavily defended – but it was an illusion that everyone believed. This included the Japanese, but they would soon make their own devastating claim.



*A member of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) stands guard over a potential invasion point*



*Japanese soldiers advancing through the Malayan Peninsula. The British did not expect the Japanese to attack through jungles and swamps*



**Below:** British soldiers of the Suffolk Regiment are held at gunpoint by Japanese infantry. They would be taken away to years of brutal captivity



**“THE IDEA THAT SINGAPORE WAS AN ‘ISLAND FORTRESS’ WAS FALSE, – ONLY THE SOUTH WAS HEAVILY DEFENDED – BUT IT WAS AN ILLUSION THAT EVERYONE BELIEVED”**

Japan was subject to a crippling trade embargo from Western powers due to its military campaigns in China and was forced to look for alternative resources. Oil was particularly needed and the most accessible supply was in Borneo, which was then part of the Dutch East Indies. However, the fields could only be obtained through conquest and Singapore was directly in the way of Japanese plans to also take Malaya and the Philippines. They knew that the British and Americans both had powerful naval presences in the Pacific, so Japanese military planners devised a combined offensive against American forces in the Philippines and Pearl Harbor and the British bases at Hong Kong and Singapore.

On 7 December 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked and Hong Kong and Singapore followed almost immediately afterwards. By 9 December, the Royal Air Force (RAF) had lost nearly all of its frontline aircraft when the Japanese attacked RAF airfields in Singapore. This effectively neutralised any aerial support for the army on the

island before a major assault had even begun. Yet, worse was still to come the following day.

As a strategically important base, Singapore had a strong naval presence that was dominated by the new battleship HMS Prince of Wales and cruiser HMS Repulse. The two ships left Singapore to sail north up the Malay coast where the Japanese were landing their invasion force. However, on 10 December, they were both sunk by Japanese torpedo bombers. Their loss stunned Churchill, “In all the war I never received a more direct shock. There were no British or American capital ships in the Indian Ocean or the Pacific except American survivors of Pearl Harbor, who were hastening back to California. Over this vast expanse of waters, Japan was supreme and we were weak.”

Churchill was right to be highly concerned, Hong Kong had fallen on 25 December with 10,000 prisoners taken. The only force now guarding Singapore and Malaya was the 85,000-90,000-strong army led by Lieutenant General Arthur Percival. The numerical strength of the British, Indian, Malayan, Australian and New Zealand troops should have been a comfort, but many of the soldiers had never seen combat and this contrasted sharply with the Japanese fighting performance.

### **Blitzkrieg in Malaya**

Although the British knew that Singapore was an obvious target for the Japanese, the high command was confident that any attack would be driven off.

British soldiers were also told that the Japanese were poor soldiers whose success against the Chinese troops was down to them being even worse at fighting. This was proved to be untrue after the fall of Hong Kong and the Japanese invasion of Malaya.

Under the command of Lieutenant General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the Japanese Army swept through the peninsula and any thoughts about a conventional war were soon shattered. The Japanese used speed, surprise and ferocity to ensure that the British never had time to regroup. At the Battle of Jitra between 11-13 December, the British were forced to retreat and left behind a huge stock of supplies, including 100 artillery pieces and machine guns as well as 300 trucks and armoured cars. The Japanese then swiftly continued advancing with most of the soldiers using bicycles as transport.

It was through this rapid march that the Allies became exposed to Japanese brutality. Soldiers were ordered to take no prisoners as they would slow up the advance and an official pamphlet stated: “When you encounter an enemy after landing, think of yourself as an avenger coming face to face at last with his father’s murderer. Here is a man whose death will lighten your heart.”

Captured Allied soldiers were killed, including some Australians who were shot then doused with petrol and set on fire. Many local civilians who assisted the Allies were tortured before being murdered. Such atrocities were shockingly unfamiliar to the Allies and the Japanese movements surprised the British. It had been confidently presumed that the Japanese would attack Singapore by sea, because the jungle and swamps of the Malay Peninsula would be too difficult to traverse. This complacency was silenced when the Japanese captured Malayan capital Kuala Lumpur on 11 January 1942. Ever since the invasion force landed in Malaya, the British defence of Singapore had been attacked from behind and the Allied army withdrew across the causeway over the Johor Strait that separated Singapore

*Now aged 96, Bob Hucklesby is the president of the National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association and is still active in charitable work for former prisoners of war*





## THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

from Malaya. The island would now play host to the final stand between the two empires.

### Arriving into chaos

Sailing into this turbulent situation was a young British soldier called Bob Hucklesby. Born in 1921, Hucklesby was a sapper in the Royal Engineers and had served in the armed forces from the outset: "I was conscripted and joined the army in May 1939. When I was called up, I put my uniform on and went off with a kitbag. I didn't know what was going to happen. War broke out on 3 September and we were on a route march passing through part of Norwich. A lady came rushing out of her home and said, 'You're doing it for real now.'"

As a sapper, Hucklesby worked on a compressor truck and was also trained in explosives. For the first two years of the war, he served as part of the Home Forces in Britain but towards the end of 1941 he was preparing to go abroad to serve in the Middle East when his transport ship was diverted. "Everything was stencilled in to go to Basra and we were in khaki drill and pith helmets etc, which was not the sort of thing for the jungle. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, we were a few days out of Cape Town. The decision was then made to send the whole division to Bombay."

While he was in India, Hucklesby had to adjust to the hot climate: "The reason we went to Bombay was to acclimatise because we had been at sea for almost three months. We had a fortnight of acclimatisation in India and my field company was at Deolali (Doolally). It was a hot spot and I can understand where the phrase, 'Gone Doolally' came from. Then we took off and arrived at Singapore on 29 January 1942."

Before he arrived on the island, Hucklesby's knowledge of his Japanese opponents was minimal: "We knew very little. In my opinion, the British should have taken note of what had already happened in China. We heard a lot about that afterwards because I met up with people in the navy who had been on gunboats on the Yangtze River. They used to tell me that every morning they [saw] dead bodies floating down the river, so we ought to have known." Hucklesby consequently came in for a direct shock when he docked at Singapore on 29 January 1942: "When we arrived on the quayside there were civilians queuing to get off, so we realised that things were serious."

Two days after Hucklesby's arrival, Percival's entire force of British and Commonwealth troops had withdrawn across the 335-metre causeway over the Strait of Johore onto Singapore Island – the causeway was subsequently blown up to prevent the Japanese from crossing. Almost 100,000 Allied soldiers were now based on Singapore, compared to Yamashita's approaching army of 30,000. Between 8-9 February, 23,000 Japanese troops crossed the straits in landing craft – largely unopposed.

Australians were among the first to see combat and their performance was highly mixed. Some simply dropped their rifles and ran, but others fought the Japanese to a standstill at a base near Johore Bahru. At the Kranji depot, the Australians incinerated many attackers by setting oil tanks alight and the Japanese Imperial Guard beheaded 200 wounded prisoners in a vengeful

*Black smoke rises from half a dozen oil and ammunition dumps in Singapore during the last days of the battle*



### **"WHEN WE ARRIVED ON THE QUAYSIDE THERE WERE CIVILIANS QUEUING TO GET OFF, SO WE REALISED THAT THINGS WERE SERIOUS"**

retaliation. At 4.30am on 9 February, an order to withdraw was accidentally given by the British high command, which proved to be a costly mistake as the main line of the Allied defence had now collapsed.

This rapidly deteriorating situation was disorientating for Hucklesby, who was forced to adjust quickly to his new circumstances, "It was a totally different environment to what we'd been used to. I remember being on guard in our tented camp that was in a rubber plantation. With the trees in line, whichever way you looked it made it difficult not to see a Japanese coming in from behind because we knew they were on the island."

Hucklesby was stationed on the coast and he put his engineering skills to work, "I used my compressor and cut two channels a good distance apart in a reinforced concrete jetty. I laid a charge down each channel and blew it up. It was far enough apart so that you could jump from one side to the other. It was meant to be a deterrent for the Japanese to use that concrete pier as a means of landing."

After preparations were complete, Hucklesby prepared to fight, "Not long after that, there were no particular duties for sappers in the Royal Engineers so we became infantry. My section was ranged along a monsoon drain

opposite a playing field, because it was thought that the Japanese had broken through the first line and they would have an advantage if they came across this field. It was also used by a herd of cows too so that made it very difficult."

Although Hucklesby's section did not see combat, they came under direct attack by Japanese bombers: "We were in that situation for about three days and used to see the Japanese air force go over on a regular basis because there was nothing to stop them. There was no Allied air force at Singapore because it was vacated to Java, so the Japanese could drop bombs and do whatever they wanted. I recall seeing a Tamil or an Indian in his white robes walking around in a circle and then you'd see a bomb drop. These bombs would blow up people but thankfully, they missed us." Despite the bombardment, Hucklesby felt secure in his position: "We thought we were reasonably safe in this rather deep monsoon drain. It was comforting in a way."

### **A growing disaster**

Hucklesby's situation was one that was being repeated thousands of times across the island. Not only was there no effective air defence, the British were paying the price for years of complacency and poor





Japanese soldiers marching through Singapore after the surrender. Their campaign to defeat the British had been successful, but at an extremely brutal cost



General Yamashita (seated right, back) demands an unconditional surrender from General Percival (seated right, front). The confident pose of the Japanese belies the fact that they were outnumbered and low on ammunition

## The Rabbit versus the Tiger

THE OPPOSING COMMANDERS AT SINGAPORE WERE BOTH PERSONALLY COURAGEOUS BUT THE BATTLE WAS LARGELY WON ON WHO POSSESSED THE MOST IMAGINATION AND CHARISMA

### Arthur Percival (1887-1966)

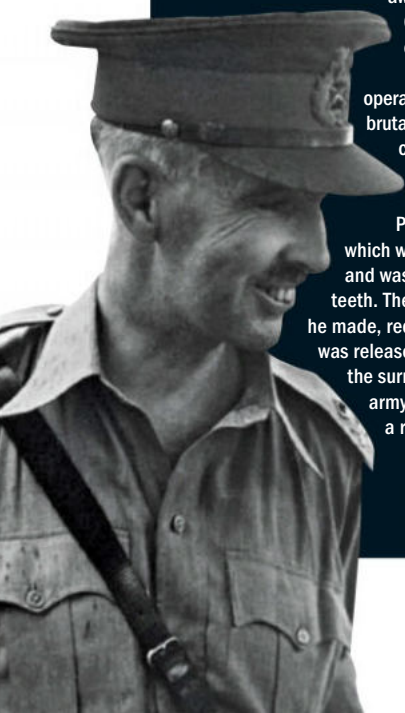
Percival has gone down in history as a failure for surrendering at Singapore but he had known successes in his career prior to 1942, as well as controversies. He had joined the British Army as a private in 1914 and was commissioned within a month. By 1917, he was colonel in command of a frontline battalion. Percival was also highly decorated and was

awarded a Military Cross, Distinguished Service Order and Croix de Guerre. He was described by his commanding officer as, "very brave and gallant."

Between 1920-22, Percival served in counter-insurgency operations in Ireland where his men earned a reputation of brutality towards the IRA. When war broke out again in 1939, he commanded 43rd Division and was evacuated from Dunkirk before being sent to command British forces in Malaya.

Although he had a distinguished combat record, Percival's experience was confined to Western Europe, which was unsuitable in the Far East. He was also uncharismatic and was nicknamed 'Rabbit' because of his prominent front teeth. These factors, combined with the serious tactical mistakes he made, reduced morale and aided defeat at Singapore. After he was released from Japanese captivity in 1945, Percival witnessed the surrender of Japan aboard USS Missouri but when he left the army, he was denied the knighthood that usually accompanied a retiring general.

*Left: Within months of his arrival in Malaya, Percival would oversee a huge capitulation to numerically inferior forces*



### Tomoyuki Yamashita (1885-1946)

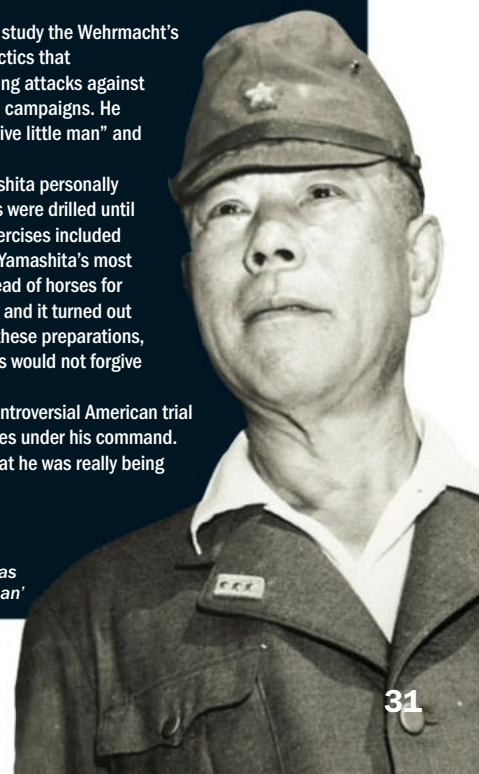
Yamashita was nicknamed 'The Tiger' for his strict, aggressive reputation. Graduating as an army officer in 1905, he was a lieutenant general by 1937 and gained combat experience leading troops in China during the late 1930s.

Yamashita was sent to Germany in 1940 to study the Wehrmacht's methods and was impressed with blitzkrieg tactics that co-ordinated air, armour and infantry in lightning attacks against the enemy. He would later use them in his own campaigns. He considered Adolf Hitler to be, "...an unimpressive little man" and thought he looked like a clerk.

To prepare for the invasion of Malaya, Yamashita personally trained his troops in jungle conditions. Soldiers were drilled until they knew their roles to perfection and their exercises included amphibious landings and bridge construction. Yamashita's most imaginative innovation was using bicycles instead of horses for transportation, as they were easier to maintain and it turned out to be a stroke of logistical genius. Because of these preparations, Singapore and Malaya rapidly fell and the Allies would not forgive Yamashita his success when the war ended.

In 1946, Yamashita was executed after a controversial American trial concerning Japanese atrocities in the Philippines under his command. Yamashita felt that the case was biased and that he was really being charged for losing the war.

*Right: Yamashita's success during WWII earned him a fearsome reputation and he was sometimes referred to as 'The Beast of Bataan'*





## THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

military planning. Shortly before the Japanese attack, the new British commander-in-chief of all forces in the Far East, General Archibald Wavell, inspected Singapore and found that there were no defences on the north shore. Wavell sent Churchill an urgent report and the prime minister later wrote of his surprise at the situation, "I must admit to being staggered by Wavell's telegram. The possibility of Singapore having no landward defences no more entered my mind than that of a battleship being launched without a bottom."

A rumour later circulated that the naval guns at Singapore could not be turned northwards but Hucklesby dispels that myth: "Those big guns only had armour-piercing shells, they didn't have any that would split. They could turn them around inland but they were no use because the shells were not good for that purpose. You can imagine how I feel when I think somebody should have realised that. I found this out years later and felt annoyed because it seemed to me that those who were there to advise hadn't really studied the situation."

It had initially been predicted that Singapore could hold out for at least three months. This would have been enough time for reinforcements to reach the island and make it too well defended for Yamashita to overcome. However, with the continual air bombardments, nerves were beginning to shred. Singapore City in particular was suffering higher civilian casualties than soldiers in the field and at the front Percival was becoming unnerved by the Japanese attack.

In reality, Yamashita's offensive was on the verge of faltering. The Japanese were outnumbered three to one and were chronically short of fuel and ammunition. Senior officers argued that a major offensive against the

British would ultimately fail, but Yamashita ignored this advice and decided to take a huge gamble. He ordered his artillery to shell the British as though his gunners had an endless supply of ammunition.

Percival fell for the ruse. As an experienced WWI veteran, he thought that the renewed barrage was comparable to the artillery offensives of the Western Front. Like Yamashita, he was also short on ammunition and limited his own gunners to 20 rounds per day. To compound the situation, Percival had also deployed his troops across the entire width of the island, resulting in his men being spread too thinly to concentrate en masse against the enemy, with disastrous results. There was fierce fighting along the Choa Chu Kang and Bukit Timah roads as well as numerous battles, including hand-to-hand fighting at Pasir Panjang, but in each case, Allied troops were overwhelmed and driven back.

Despite this, the Japanese senior commanders were still urging Yamashita to reconsider his options. They continuously advised him to withdraw his forces to Malaya in order for them to resupply, ready to begin a fresh attack with more men and more ammunition. However, Yamashita literally stuck to his guns and gave the orders that the artillery barrage and advance against the Allies would continue. The last thing he wanted was to give the British a chance to recover, particularly when Churchill was unleashing his bulldog spirit.

**"THERE MUST BE NO THOUGHT OF SAVING THE TROOPS OR SPARING THE POPULATION. THE BATTLE MUST BE FOUGHT TO THE BITTER END AT ALL COSTS"**



**Above:** When General Percival was released from captivity, he was placed directly behind Allied Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur to witness the Japanese surrender aboard USS Missouri on 2 September 1945. Percival is the figure on the left behind MacArthur

### An empire dishonoured

The prime minister was aware of the deteriorating situation and sent a highly uncompromising cable to Wavell for fighting to continue: "There must be no thought of saving the troops or sparing the population. The battle must be fought to the bitter end at all costs. Commanders and senior officers should die



**A mother grieves over the loss of her child who is lying dead beside her after a Japanese bombing raid. Tens of thousands of Singaporean civilians were killed**



# Conquering 'The Gibraltar of the East'

THE FALL OF SINGAPORE WAS COMPLETED BY INCOMPETENT BRITISH-LED WITHDRAWALS AND JAPANESE TACTICS THAT WERE BOTH CUNNING AND BRUTAL

## 8-9 FEBRUARY

### BATTLE OF SARIMBUN BEACH

Two Japanese divisions land in north-west Singapore with Australian machine gunners firing on the invaders. The 22nd Brigade takes the brunt of the attack from the Japanese and they are forced to withdraw.

## 11 FEBRUARY

### THE JAPANESE ADVANCE

The Japanese 5th Division attacks British, Indian and Chinese troops along the Choa Chu Kang and Bukit Timah roads and forces them to retreat further inland.

## 7-8 FEBRUARY

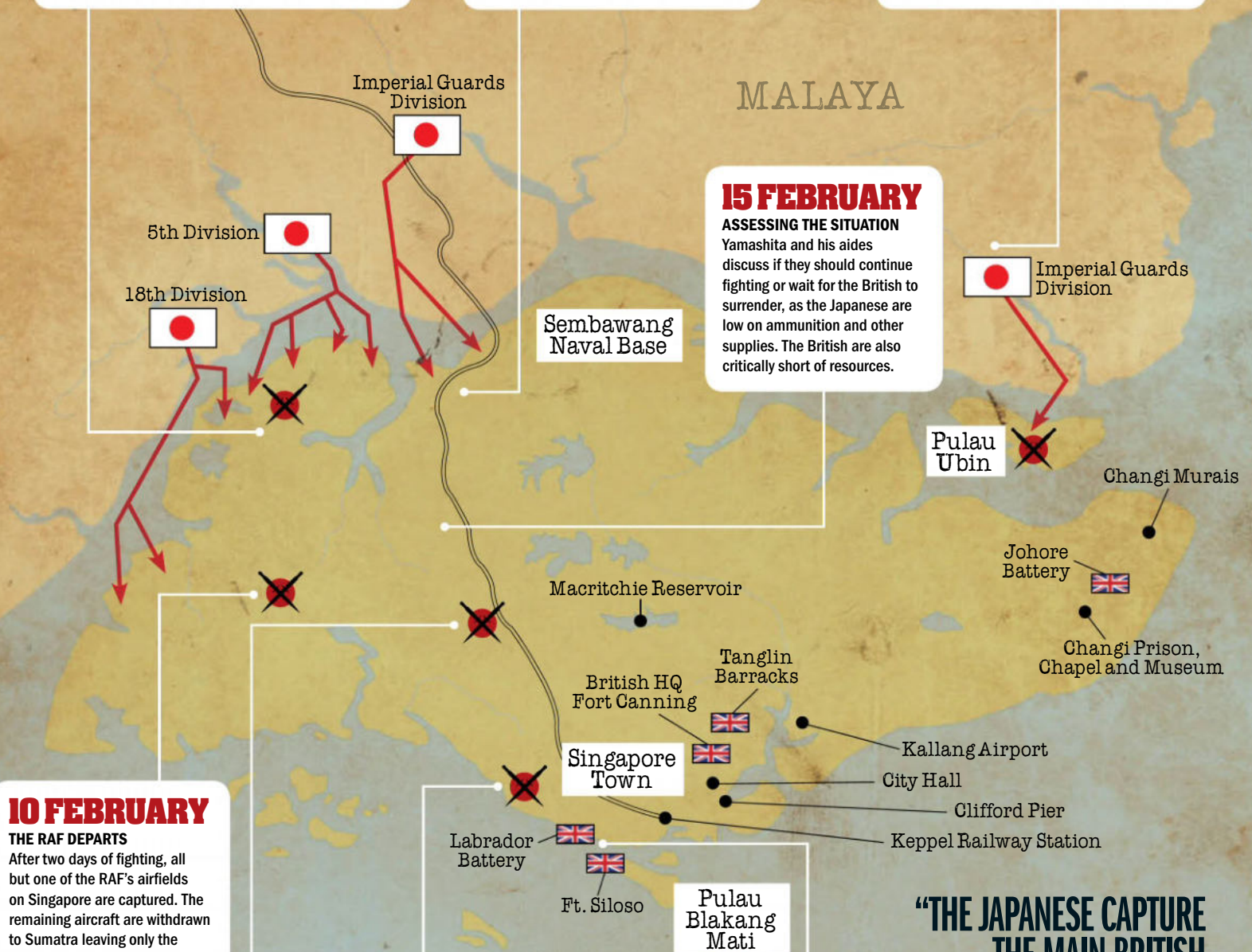
### A DECEPTIVE MANOEUVRE

The Imperial Japanese Guards Division carry out a feint to the north east of the island while shelling increases. Percival does not change his thinly spread positions despite the feint.

## 15 FEBRUARY

### ASSESSING THE SITUATION

Yamashita and his aides discuss if they should continue fighting or wait for the British to surrender, as the Japanese are low on ammunition and other supplies. The British are also critically short of resources.



## 10 FEBRUARY

### THE RAF DEPARTS

After two days of fighting, all but one of the RAF's airfields on Singapore are captured. The remaining aircraft are withdrawn to Sumatra leaving only the army to defend the island.

## 15 FEBRUARY

### THE BRITISH CAPITULATE

A British surrender party arrives at Yamashita's headquarters at the Ford Motor Factory. After fractious negotiations, terms of surrender are signed at 6.10pm and the guns fall silent at 8.30pm.

## 12-15 FEBRUARY

### BATTLE OF PASIR PANJANG

The Malay Regiment fights bravely against a Japanese attack along the Pasir Panjang Ridge on Singapore's south-west coast. There are heavy casualties and fierce hand-to-hand fighting before the Malay troops are overwhelmed.

## 14 FEBRUARY

### HOSPITAL ATROCITY

The Japanese capture the main British ammunition dump at Alexandra Barracks before entering the nearby military hospital. They murder hundreds of wounded patients and staff.

**"THE JAPANESE CAPTURE THE MAIN BRITISH AMMUNITION DUMP AT ALEXANDRA BARRACKS BEFORE ENTERING THE NEARBY MILITARY HOSPITAL. THEY MURDER HUNDREDS OF WOUNDED PATIENTS AND STAFF"**



## THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

with their troops. The honour of the British Empire and of the British Army is at stake. I rely on you to show no mercy or weakness in any form. The whole reputation of our country and our race is involved. It is expected that every unit will be brought into close contact with the enemy and fight it out."

Despite the bloodthirsty rhetoric from Churchill, Wavell and Percival thought differently. The ferocious nature of the Japanese offensive was overwhelming on a practical level, the water supply had almost been destroyed and there was a high risk of an epidemic resulting from the many unburied dead in Singapore City. Wavell sent a message to Percival from Java on the morning of 15 February, urging him to continue fighting but he ended his communication saying, "When you are finally satisfied that this is no longer possible, I give you discretion to cease resistance. Before doing so, all arms, equipment and transport of value must, of course, be rendered useless."

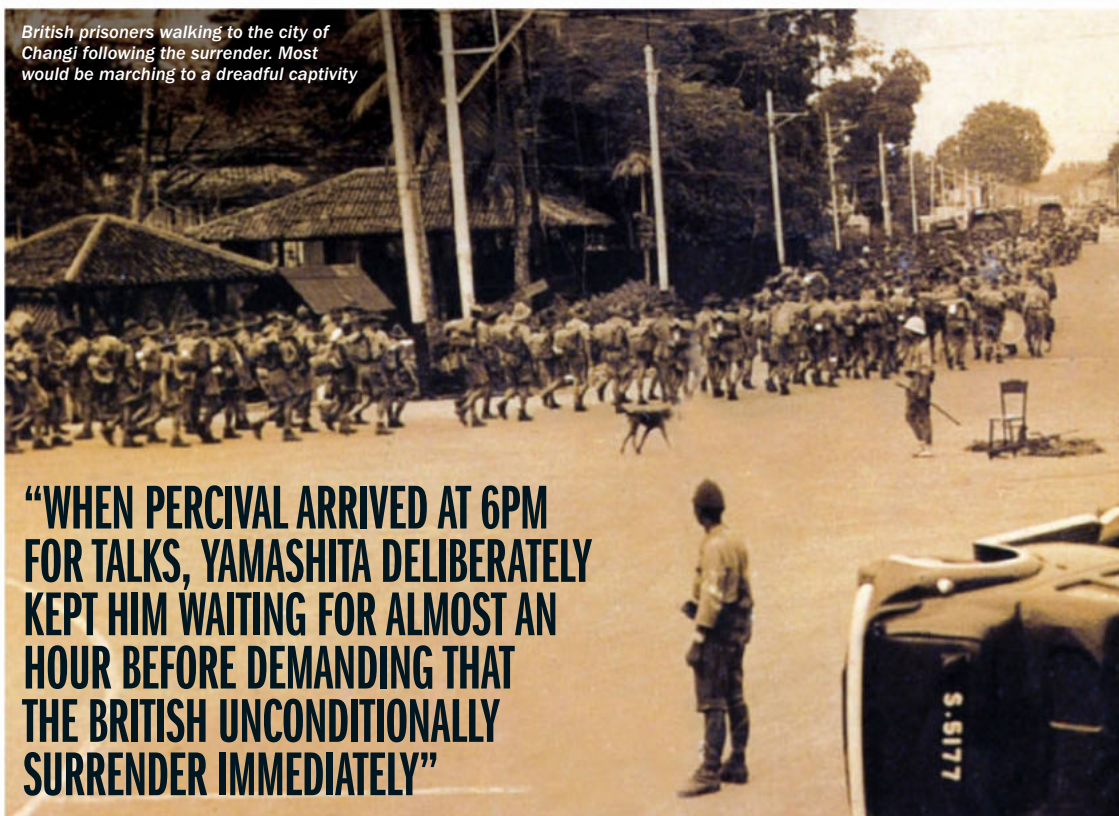
Percival agreed and sent three officers to the Japanese headquarters to arrange a ceasefire. Yamashita agreed but he initially suspected a British deception. As the Japanese were greatly outnumbered, he feared that the Allies were buying time or trying to organise a Dunkirk-style evacuation. Neither was acceptable to Yamashita as he could no longer afford another big offensive. In an attempt to force Percival's hand, Yamashita invited him to surrender talks at the Ford Motor Company's assembly plant. The location was deliberate as it was the largest building on the island and could easily accommodate the large number of Japanese reporters, photographers and newsreel cameramen that Yamashita had assembled to record the occasion.

When Percival arrived at 6pm for talks, Yamashita deliberately kept him waiting for almost an hour before demanding that the British unconditionally surrender immediately. Percival attempted to delay until the following day but Yamashita persisted and told his interpreter: "I want to hear nothing from him except yes or no." Faced with no choice Percival accepted an unconditional surrender.

This was the defining moment of Yamashita's career. He had been informed that Singapore could hold out for 18 months and would require five divisions to overwhelm the defences. Against the odds he had accomplished the island's conquest in a campaign lasting 70 days and with only three divisions. For the Allies, and particularly the British, it was total humiliation, especially when Yamashita ordered the entire garrison to be paraded in front of his army and Japanese news photographers.

Away from the high-level negotiations Huckleby was still on alert when news reached him of the surrender: "After about four days we learned through a courier that the British had called it a day and capitulated (a word I don't like using). We got out of the trench, and when I took my boots off I discovered they were coloured white because I'd been in water for days. Then we made our way to a large house and I met up with others from the same field company that I was in. While I was there I thought, 'I'm not letting the Japanese use my compressor' so I got the tools out, took the

*British prisoners walking to the city of Changi following the surrender. Most would be marching to a dreadful captivity*




**"WHEN PERCIVAL ARRIVED AT 6PM FOR TALKS, YAMASHITA DELIBERATELY KEPT HIM WAITING FOR ALMOST AN HOUR BEFORE DEMANDING THAT THE BRITISH UNCONDITIONALLY SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY"**

*General Arthur Percival (right end) marches towards the Japanese headquarters to surrender Singapore bearing the Union Flag and the white flag*







head off one of the cylinders, removed the valves and threw them away so it couldn't be used. We hung about all day and then later on we were told where we had to line up on this road ready to march off to Changi."

### A bloody aftermath

The fight for Singapore had been a devastating encounter. The casualties of the battle itself were around 5,000 Allied and 4,485 Japanese dead and wounded. Nevertheless, worse was still to come. Japanese soldiers were already notorious for their brutality while on campaign and now they inflicted their wrath on Singapore's civilians.

The military police rounded up tens of thousands of Chinese men as well as diverse members of the professional classes. They were taken out of town, shot and dumped in mass graves, with estimates of the dead ranging wildly between 5,000-100,000. Yamashita later claimed that he was unaware of the atrocities but as he was nominally in charge of the island, it is virtually impossible that he was ignorant of the atrocities.

Away from this horror, the Japanese, with no sense of irony, renamed Singapore 'Shonan' (Light of the South) and their victory allowed them to consolidate their conquest of the Dutch East Indies and its oil. This gave Japan a vital lifeline for its conquests.

The conquest effectively neutralised the British as a serious threat in the Pacific for a number of years, but the loss of prestige was arguably more damaging. 80,000 soldiers were captured in a surrender that signalled a significant death knell to the British Empire. The sheer number of prisoners was a surprise both to the Japanese and even to British soldiers like Hucklesby: "It wasn't long after becoming a prisoner of war and being without food for three days that we realised it was not going to be as short a stay as we originally thought. The Japanese decided that they had to do something with the vast numbers of prisoners. They didn't expect that number and we also didn't expect that number to be there. We had no idea how many Allied troops there were on the island."

As one of the many thousands who were captured, Hucklesby felt that the British could have fought on, but reflects that it was an unfortunate situation. "I don't think surrender was inevitable, but the British and the Allies were at a disadvantage from day one," he reflects. "It seemed to me that it was only towards the end when the Japanese got onto the island. If there hadn't been a capitulation there would have been no drinking water for the thousands of natives who lived on the island. To me, giving up wasn't quite as definite because there were other reasons. Nevertheless, it was a hell of a blow."

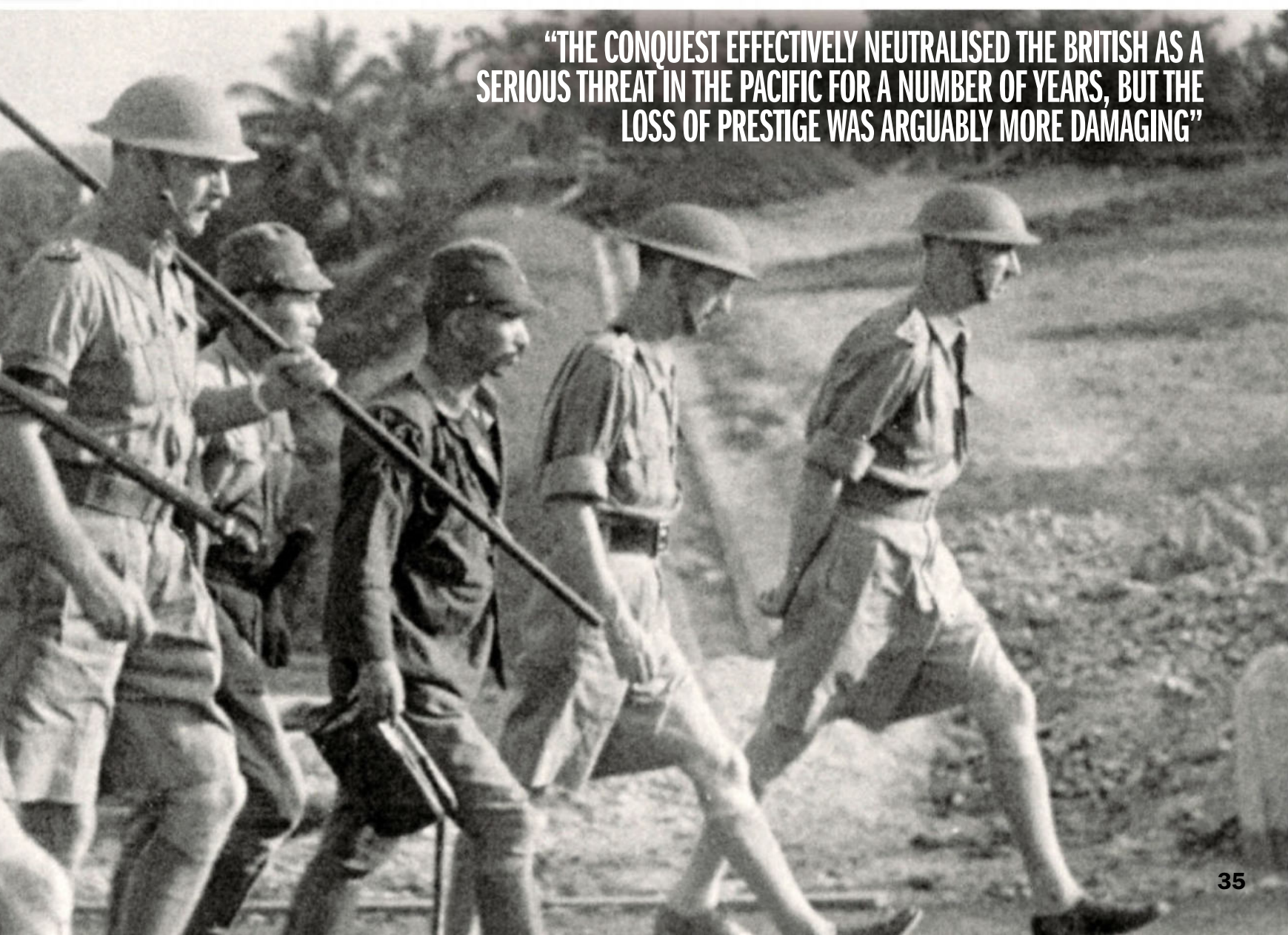
Hucklesby believes that the blame for surrender lies solely with senior Allied commanders. "You've got to realise that Britain was involved in war on several fronts and Singapore and Hong Kong were a long way off. There was nothing that got in the way of the Japanese making it all the way down Malaya.

"They had a good foothold and in my opinion it was too sudden and too late for the Allies to have taken that on board correctly and, with good advice, find a way to deal with that particular war. It was a huge strategic error."

In the immediate aftermath of the surrender, Hucklesby was angry at the decisions made by the Allied high command: "At the time I was disgusted, I felt that they hadn't taken the Japanese seriously enough for long enough. To give you some idea, I didn't apply for my medals until around 1965 because I didn't really want to wear them."

Nevertheless, Hucklesby is remarkably generous towards the man most responsible for the fall of Singapore, with whom most historians have lumped the majority of the blame. "I never really blamed Percival because he was more of an administrator than a soldier and he should have been surrounded by the right advisors. He tried to compensate as much as he could because he got involved with Far East POWs when we got home. He didn't desert us and he could have done."

**"THE CONQUEST EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALISED THE BRITISH AS A SERIOUS THREAT IN THE PACIFIC FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, BUT THE LOSS OF PRESTIGE WAS ARGUABLY MORE DAMAGING"**







*Allied POWs working on the Burma Railway. Despite being afflicted with multiple diseases, Bob Hucklesby was forced to work by the Japanese*

# Horror in captivity

**BOB HUCKLESBY JOINED THOUSANDS OF OTHER POWS IN DREADFUL CAPTIVITY AND MANAGED TO SURVIVE THE BURMA RAILWAY, JAPANESE BRUTALITY AND TERRIBLE DISEASES**

WWII has become synonymous with death and destruction on a scale never seen before or since. For most people, the sheer terror of the conflict is epitomised by the Holocaust and the mass implementation of industrial genocide. Nevertheless, the brutality of the war took many different forms across the world and the conduct of the Japanese in the Pacific equalled Germany and the Soviet Union for their appalling treatment of those who opposed them. It is estimated that between 3-14 million people may have been murdered by the Japanese military and government through massacres, human experimentation, starvation and forced labour.

Thousands of these victims were Allied prisoners of war, many of whom were part of the 80,000 men captured at Singapore. For three and half years, these soldiers faced unimaginable conditions: disease, violence, malnutrition and death were everyday facts of life. Bob Hucklesby was one of many who endured this nightmare and survived. His story is a sobering reminder that war can bring out the worst, but also the best, in humanity.

## Captivity in Singapore

In the initial aftermath of the surrender at Singapore, Hucklesby quickly realised that he would have to make himself useful: "I was in the camp and was told that the Japanese were looking for working parties and carpenters because they had come across the Royal Engineers. I realised from the little I'd seen that

the Asians cut wood by pulling saws and planes towards them instead of pushing. I immediately thought "We're all at square one here" so I volunteered as a carpenter. That took me down to Singapore where we built frames for warehouses for them to store their loot."

While he was en route, Hucklesby witnessed the reality of Japanese brutality: "On the way down, we marched down a street and there on six bamboo poles were the heads of Chinese people. They'd been slaughtered. Also, walking alongside me was a Japanese soldier and there was a yapping dog so he fixed his bayonet and charged it through the belly, so I knew we were in for a tough time. It was a shock."

Hucklesby spent the first six months of his captivity on the island and in all the years of his captivity he recalls that he only ever met a handful of Japanese soldiers who treated him with decency. Two of these men were stationed in Singapore. "One said in sign language that he sold hats in a shop and, in his own way, tried to tell me he was a Christian," Hucklesby remembers. "The other one was a young fellow who looked rather simple and he came back from a day off in Singapore and brought me some sweets. Other than those two, there was only one other soldier that I remember was reasonable."

In an experience that was all too common for POWs, Hucklesby soon fell foul of the Japanese and experienced mistreatment inflicted almost at random. "While I was down, there was another soldier who didn't like the sight of me. He pulled me out, gave me a log and I had

to stand there with this log above my head. I watched him all the time and, fortunately for me, it was near his lunchtime so when he went for his lunch, I immediately dropped the log and disappeared into another working party so that he couldn't find me. I was holding the log for about three quarters of an hour, which wasn't too long. It wasn't long enough for him to come back and have a go at me with his bayonet."

Hucklesby discovered that he had to develop new methods in order to survive: "It was important to get streetwise very early. You didn't stand still, you just kept walking or you always did an act and pretended to be doing something."

Although he could fend off Japanese violence to a certain extent, Hucklesby could not escape the disease that was rampaging through prisoner camps, "It was during this period that malnutrition started to catch up with me. It was helped by having terrible dysentery. I got to the stage where I couldn't read because people passed books around to each other in the hut and I was worried. I was told that what I needed was palm oil that contained Vitamin A. I still had a few Singapore dollars left so I got someone to go under the wire and get me some palm oil and that stopped it getting worse."

Despite the passage of more than 70 years, Hucklesby continues to suffer from the effects of his wartime illnesses, "I still can't read for very long, I couldn't read a book. I can read papers because the articles aren't that long." Dysentery was not the only disease he had to

**"COMRADESHIP BETWEEN PRISONERS IS MORE INTENSE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE"**



## "ALTHOUGH HE COULD FEND OFF JAPANESE VIOLENCE TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, HUCKLESBY COULD NOT ESCAPE THE DISEASE THAT WAS RAMPAGING THROUGH PRISONER CAMPS"



A prisoner of war during the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway. Hucklesby's appearance would have been similar to this man upon his liberation in 1945

contend with, "Not only did I have dysentery, but in Thailand I had malaria every 10-12 weeks and then from the malnutrition I had wet and dry beriberi, pellagra, scabies and ringworm. You're looking at a very fortunate person."

### The Burma Railway

In early 1943, Hucklesby and thousands of other prisoners were removed from Singapore and transported up to Thailand to work on the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway. This notorious track was the Japanese Army's logistical plan to transport soldiers and supplies from Bangkok to Burma. 61,000 POWs were forced to work on the line along with as many as 250,000 native workers. The railway was 421 kilometres long and was constructed in just over a year.

It is estimated that between 13,000-16,000 POWs died working on it, with one man dying for every sleeper that was laid. Between 90,000-100,000 natives also died and it was in this horrific situation that Hucklesby found himself, "I went up to Thailand and landed at the railhead that was at Ban Pong. From there we took off and walked through the jungle and stopped at two plots. One was to help another working party and then we carried on. I was on the camp at Canyu 3, which was the section of laying the base of the railway. There were three camps and mine was in the one that was highest up. It was here that the malaria and dysentery got me down."

Hucklesby was already a very sick man but he was still expected to work, "A working party included 120 men, 100 of who had to go out. The other 20 were either sick or worked in the camp preparing the food and keeping the place clean. It got to the stage where I couldn't really walk and I used to be carried out for three or four days. I would be sat next to a fire and it

would be my job to keep the fire going and to boil the water for people to drink."

During his captivity, Hucklesby began to lose his sense of time and focussed on simply getting through each day. "Days and months don't mean a thing because you haven't got any way of registering it. You just know that next morning you've woken up."

Despite his illnesses he also still had to keep one step ahead of the Japanese, "You had to be very streetwise and be on the move. Even if a Japanese soldier was 55-60 metres away, you still stopped and bowed because otherwise he'd come for you and either hit you with the butt of his rifle or with his foot. You realised that you had a different environment to adapt to. Those that didn't, suffered. They either wouldn't stop or they'd try and argue with the guards. A lot of those that didn't adapt didn't come home."

In the end, Hucklesby knew that the best way to survive mistreatment was to lay low, "Ultimately you could tell that they were soldiers and came from this brutal regime and that it was best to bide your time and leave things as they were."

Hucklesby is clear that his captors were seemingly motivated by violence, "It was part of their culture. Not only were the Japanese brutal but so were the Koreans. With this brutal regime, the emperor and the ordinary people didn't have a chance. After the war, the Japanese realised that they needed America to put them back on their feet and it would help if they became more Westernised."

Despite this appalling treatment, Hucklesby was able to survive thanks to his fellow prisoners, "Comradeship between prisoners is more intense than anywhere else. What you needed was three of you mucking in together. The Aussies called them 'muckers' and we called them 'mates'. You didn't need to be friends, you just needed to have that feeling that someone else is there to look after you. You needed three because it wasn't possible for one to always be there."

This arrangement had great practical benefits, "They would look after you when you had malaria, get you water, help you to drink and do other things for you. They would clean you up when you had dysentery and boil you water when you weren't well. The bonus was that they would share the food that you didn't eat. The intensity of that comradeship has lasted, it doesn't disappear."

Despite this mutual co-operation, it wasn't always enough to help prisoners survive because the Japanese deliberately withheld aid. The result was that POWs needlessly died, "It only needed the Japanese to say, 'We will provide a basic standard of first aid or medication' and a lot of this wouldn't have happened. They didn't even let the Red Cross provide it either. I shared two parcels in my time. One was for 17 of us and the other was for 11. If they could do it twice, there was no reason it couldn't have been done more often. I also heard that they did receive

parcels but they used them for themselves. I don't think we got all of them and it makes me feel annoyed because a lot of my friends would still be here otherwise."

Hucklesby feels very lucky to have survived his experiences and has never forgotten his comrades, "Because I was so fortunate, one of the things I needed to do was to never forget those who were left behind and I've been involved with the Far East Prisoner of War Association since 1950."

### Liberation and Recovery

Throughout his ordeal, Hucklesby had no idea how the war was progressing, "I didn't know a thing. I didn't even know when it was over. The first thing we knew that the situation was changing was when I could hear an airplane in the distance in daylight. The noise got closer and closer and then I could see the markings on the plane and they were of the RAF. It flew over the camp and the airman in this Dakota opened the door and waved."

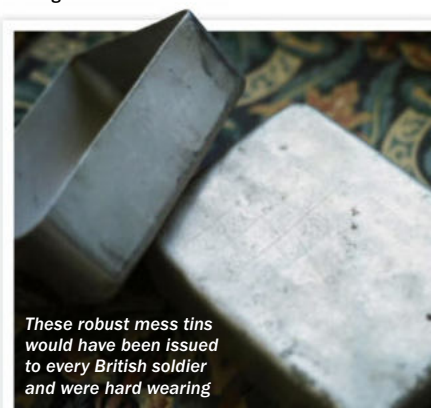
Hucklesby has always remembered that moment, "It was marvellous and I thought 'I've made it.' You can understand how fortunate I was just to live. The aircraft then turned around and waved again to tell us to clear the central roadway down the camp and they dropped provisions. It was something I shall never forget."

## Basics of life

### BOB HUCKLESBY'S SURVIVAL IN JAPANESE PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS OWED MUCH TO TWO SIMPLE ALUMINIUM TINS

The tins had originally belonged to Private L Wootton of the Sherwood Foresters. Wootton had died of cholera in another camp before they arrived in the hospital of the camp where Hucklesby was held. He was at least the third owner of the tins.

Hucklesby used the small tin for boiled water and the larger one for food. Meals were extremely basic. Rice was issued three times a day with an evening vegetable stew. Meat was eaten once a fortnight. The tins were Hucklesby's most valuable possessions from July 1943 until his liberation. He later donated them to the Sherwood Foresters Regimental Museum in Nottingham Castle.



These robust mess tins would have been issued to every British soldier and were hard wearing



It transpired that Hucklesby's camp had been liberated days after the Japanese surrender, "That plane came over on 28 August 1945, which was 13 days after the end of the war but we didn't know. It only made sense to me later because within a day an officer and his driver came into the camp in a Jeep and I thought, 'How did he get as near as this?' but of course he would have already known that the war was over and he must have been waiting nearby."

During this euphoria, the POWs' tormentors made a discreet exit, "The Japanese just disappeared. We didn't see them anymore, which was sensible because I'm certain we would have taken revenge so long as it didn't hurt us."

Freedom came just in time for Hucklesby, who was still extremely ill: "About a fortnight before the camp liberation, I had washed myself in a pond that had been created out of water from monsoon period. That was silly of me because I got a bug or something in my ears and I couldn't open my jaw. The only thing I could do was eat my rice through my teeth."

His condition was so bad that he was almost skeletal in appearance, "I weighed about seven and half stone, I was all ribs of course. I was in a very poor condition at the end. You could tell because I was one of the first to leave the camp when arrangements were made to transport us out."

Even now, his ordeal wasn't quite over, "I was taken to the railhead and put on a cattle truck and went on my way to Bangkok but I couldn't go all the way because the rail bridge across the river had been blown. I had two options, I could walk across on a plank or I could wait until there was a barge to take me across the river. I looked at that plank and the river and thought 'I'm not doing that.' So I waited. When I got on the barge, I was taken down to Bangkok and I think I spent about four days sleeping on the floor of a house while arrangements were made."

Hucklesby was flown to a Burmese hospital where he received proper medical attention for the first time in years and the effects of his captivity were very apparent, "At Rangoon there were people to meet us. I was in this hospital and it was really jammed full. I remember that a nurse took my arm and guided me to a marquee, sat me down and made me a cup of tea with sugar in it. I couldn't drink it because I hadn't had sugar for three and a half years." He was also able to send a communication back to Britain, "Lady Mountbatten came round and we were all told we could send a message home and so I was able to tell my parents that I was alive."

After ten days, Hucklesby was transferred to a hospital ship for reassessment where his condition surprised medical staff, "The doctor said to me, 'Why is your skin that colour?' and I told him it was because I had had pellagra. None of them had seen it before so I stripped off and walked up and down these tables so they could all see what it was like."

## "HIS CONDITION WAS SO BAD THAT HE WAS ALMOST SKELETAL IN APPEARANCE"

From this point, Hucklesby's condition improved and he was able to recover in comfort in India, "I was sent to a hospital up in the hills where I was treated very well. I could eat what I wanted, when I wanted and I had medicine. I must have been there for about three weeks. I then had a bed on a hospital train – which was very nice because the bed was at window level – and was taken to Poona. It was wonderful because I could sit there and see the scenery."

While he was recovering at Poona, Hucklesby was informed that he was now well enough to fly home, "I said 'Have I got an option?' and they said yes. I said I didn't want people to see me as I was and I'd rather come home on a hospital ship from Bombay. I learned afterwards that it was an international order from the Red Cross that we should have those options." As a result, Hucklesby didn't return home until 19 November 1945 when he docked at Southampton, "When I saw those white cliffs at the Isle of Wight I said to myself, 'You're not leaving Britain again.' I realised that I was fortunate and ought to take advantage of that."

## Remembrance

Hucklesby has always been aware of how lucky he was to survive his captivity and it has informed his outlook ever since, "There have been two things that I've always considered since coming home. One of the things you mustn't do after being that fortunate is to not put yourself under pressure because it is not everything in life. The other thing is, that it's important if you want respect to give other people respect. In the back of my mind I'm always grateful."

Hucklesby is now the president of the National FEPOW (Far East Prisoner of War) Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association and took part in the commemorations for the 70th anniversary of VJ Day in 2015. At a service at Saint Martin-in-the-Fields Church in central London, he met Queen Elizabeth II and the monarch's presence was greatly appreciated, "She was very nice. We had a bit of a chat, I said 'Thank you ma'am for coming to our service' and she looked me straight in the face and said 'I wanted to come.' The queen and the Duke of Edinburgh had asked to be there. It wasn't an official event, the BBC and others hadn't responded beforehand so I was grateful to her. That made all the difference because the BBC got involved and the Royal British Legion made a better showing than they would have done had she not been there."

Today, Hucklesby is modest about how he would like people to remember the Far East prisoners of war, "Just give that person respect. I had to go to hospital recently and one of the staff realised I was a POW and came across to shake my hand. I don't want any more than that. It means a lot because it meant that someone else knew that there were prisoners of war and that so many didn't return. I'd like people to remember that they've got a stone in their memory thousands of miles away."

*Below: Allied POWs shortly after their liberation near Yokohama, Japan, August 1945. Their gaunt appearances are testament to the malnourishment that was common in Japanese prisoner camps*



## National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare Remembrance Association

**NFFWRA IS THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION PROVIDING PRACTICAL HELP AND ASSISTANCE TO FORMER FEPOWS (FAR EAST PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIAN INTERNEES) AND THEIR WIVES AND WIDOWS**

The association can help with arranging home adaptations and mobility equipment for former FEPOWs and financial payments for hospitals, nursing homes and transportation for reunions.

Reunion events are held biannually with the next one being a tribute service for former POWs and their families at Norwich Cathedral on Sunday 12 February 2017 at 3.30pm.

For more information visit [www.nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk](http://www.nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk) or contact [enquires@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk](mailto:enquires@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk)



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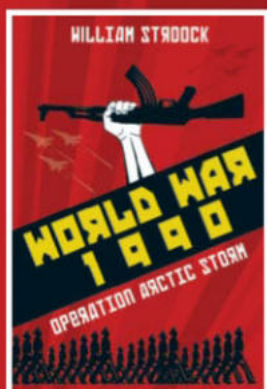
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# 'IN A DIFFERENT 1990'



- At Downing Street, Prime Minister Thatcher urges the Americans to continue the war.
- In the North Sea, HMS Tenacious hunts Soviet Subs.
- In Norway, the SAS mounts a daring commando raid on a Soviet held airbase.
- In Germany, the British Army of the Rhine fights a massive armoured battle.

It's two minutes to midnight in  
*World War 1990: Operation Arctic Storm*

- After the Battle of the Norwegian Sea, NATO is determined to invade Eastern Europe.
- As the Army of the Danube assembles, the United States gathers a massive fleet in the Pacific.
- Meanwhile the struggle between the hawks and the doves reaches critical mass and Gorbachev moves to take control.

The battle moves to communist territory in  
*World War 1990: Operation Eastern Storm*



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Great Battles

# THE BATTLE OF THE PYRAMIDS

WORDS MARC G. DESANTIS

Napoleon Bonaparte and the Army of the Orient clash with the Mamluks in a desperate battle in the shadow of the Pharaohs



## EMBABA, EGYPT 21 JULY 1798

**B**etween 1796-97, Napoleon Bonaparte proved himself to be one of the finest generals in the world. As commander-in-chief of France's Army of Italy, he crushed the Austrians in northern Italy, showing that he could defeat superior enemy forces through a remarkable combination of speed and surprise. His successes in the Italian campaign also cemented his close relationship with his men, who came to idolise him.

With the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio, the War of the First Coalition was brought to a close, and Napoleon was next tasked with carrying on the war against Great Britain. Napoleon's blow against "perfidious Albion" would not land against the British Isles, however, but Egypt.

### Why Egypt?

The idea of an invasion of Egypt was first conceived by Revolutionary France's foreign minister, the defrocked priest Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. Talleyrand urged that Egypt, a province of the declining Ottoman Empire, be made a province of the French Republic. "The French conquest will usher in a period of prosperity for Egypt," he promised.

Napoleon himself weighed in favour of an attack on Egypt. Upon his return from Italy, he had been given the command of France's 'Army of England', a force assembled to carry out an invasion of Britain. He had inspected his troops and what he found did not bode well at all for an attack, as the Royal Navy was too strong for him to attempt a crossing of the Channel. An alternative was therefore needed, and this left the conquest of Egypt as a means of indirectly harming Britain. Only by capturing Egypt, Napoleon argued, could France 'truly destroy England.'

France's directory government gave its assent to a plan for invasion, seeing the acquisition of Egypt as a way of replacing lost colonies in the West Indies and also as a stronghold from which to undertake a future offensive against British India. From Egypt, relations might be established in India with the fiercely anti-British Sultan of Mysore, Tippoo Sahib.

### A new Alexander

When contemplating his venture to Egypt, Napoleon likened himself to Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king who had taken the country in ancient times. He admired Alexander, seeing him as an enlightened conqueror who had brought the advanced Greek civilisation to the peoples of the backward Persian Empire. Napoleon wished to bring the benefits of Western civilisation to Egypt, which he believed had been smothered for centuries under the weight of the stagnant and oppressive Ottomans.

Ensuring good relations with the native Egyptians was important to Napoleon. He wanted to win them over and bring them into France's empire as peacefully as possible. His model, Alexander, had respected local customs of the lands that he conquered, and Napoleon intended to do the same. While in Egypt,

*In a painting by Antoine Jean Gros, Napoleon Bonaparte harangues his army before the Battle of the Pyramids begins*



Napoleon would give strict orders to his men forbidding them from taking anything from the local people without the express permission of their commanding officers. Disobedience would bring a two-year prison sentence and the forfeiture of all possessions. As it turned out, however, the Egyptians would never accept their conquest by the French, seeing them as alien and non-Muslim invaders in their land.

With the decision to mount an expedition to Egypt made, 3 million francs were borrowed from Swiss bankers to finance the project. For ten weeks, mountains of supplies and thousands of men were gathered at five Mediterranean ports, including Toulon, Marseilles, Ajaccio, Genoa and Civitavecchia. Most of the men and officers boarding the transport ships had fought with Napoleon before as part of his Army of Italy. All told, some 38,000 men of Napoleon's 'Army of the Orient' were embarked at the various ports, and the convoys set sail in May 1798. Napoleon's own convoy of transports departed from Toulon on 19 May, guarded by a fleet under the command of Vice-Admiral Francois-Paul Brueys. Security had been kept so tight that the soldiers themselves had no idea where they were headed. They were, nonetheless, willing to follow their brilliant general wherever he led.

If the expeditionary fleet were to reach Egypt safely, it would first have to evade the Royal Navy that was hunting it. Britain's Mediterranean fleet

was commanded by the equally brilliant Rear Admiral Horatio Nelson, but he would not have good luck while waiting for the French convoy to depart from Toulon. He knew that it was to sail soon but on 21 May, a fierce storm pushed his own fleet far out to sea and dismantled his flagship, HMS Vanguard. By the time he had made repairs, Napoleon had linked up with the other convoys coming from Marseilles, Genoa and Ajaccio. The storm had also separated Nelson's frigates from the main fleet, and Nelson was deprived of their vital reconnaissance.

Napoleon's ships sailed south, met up with the Civitavecchia convoy and then made a landing in the Grand Harbour of Valletta in Malta on 10 June. The Knights of Malta had controlled the island for centuries, but the order had declined greatly since its days of glory. Many of the 327 knights present were superannuated men incapable of fighting, while others were French and unwilling to fight fellow Frenchmen. Napoleon had little trouble seizing the island, which surrendered on 11 June. He installed a garrison of 4,000 men and on 19 June, set sail once more. He would not tell his men their true destination until long after they had left Malta behind.

The French fleet continued to elude Nelson, and reached Egypt without being intercepted. On 1 July, at the fishing village of Marabout, eight kilometres to the west of Alexandria, Napoleon landed his

troops and the city fell to him the next day. It was now that he gave out the official reason for his mission to Egypt, claiming that the ruling Mamluk beys ('bey' was the title of an Ottoman provincial governor) had been mistreating French merchants and he had come to secure reparations for the injuries done to them. He also pledged to free the native Egyptians from the tyrannical rule of the foreign Mamluks, the overlords of Egypt since the 13th century.

## The Mamluks

Egypt in 1798 was technically a province of the Ottoman Empire, but in practice, imperial suzerainty over it was only notional. Real power in the land was held by the Mamluks, a warrior-aristocracy, with their capital in Cairo that lorded over the fellahin, the much-oppressed Egyptian peasantry. The population of the country was primarily Muslim, with significant minorities of both Christians and Jews. Originally, the Mamluks had been brought to Egypt around 1230 by an Ayyubid sultan who wanted a soldiery more loyal than could be found among native troops. The Mamluks ('Mamluk' means 'bought man' in Arabic) were top-notch warriors, and by 1258, had seized power for themselves.

To sustain their numbers, they continued to purchase slaves to turn into future Mamluks. Egypt was conquered by the expanding Ottoman Empire in 1517, but the Mamluks, after submitting, had been left in place. Now owing fealty to the Sultan in Istanbul, they were obligated to pay an annual tribute to him. Over time, the bond with the Ottomans weakened until the Mamluks were vassals in name only, and left largely to their own devices. Ottoman power in Egypt was upheld by the figurehead of the local pasha, to whom the Mamluks paid little heed.

**"SECURITY HAD BEEN KEPT SO TIGHT THAT THE SOLDIERS THEMSELVES HAD NO IDEA WHERE THEY WERE HEADED. THEY WERE, NONETHELESS, WILLING TO FOLLOW THEIR BRILLIANT GENERAL WHEREVER HE LED"**

*Napoleon admires the Sphinx, which is located near to the pyramids. There is a popular tale that a French cannonball took off the sculpture's nose, though it is now thought to have been lost much earlier*





# OPPOSING FORCES



vs



## FRANCE

### LEADER

Napoleon Bonaparte

### INFANTRY

22,000+

### CAVALRY

3,000

### ARTILLERY

42

## MAMLUKS

### LEADERS

Murad Bey

### INFANTRY

15,000+ fellahin,  
Ottoman & other infantry

### CAVALRY

6,000 Mamluks plus  
3,000 Bedouins

### ARTILLERY

40

The modern Mamluks of the late 18th century continued the practice of recruiting outside Egypt, buying youngsters mainly from among the Circassians and Georgians of the Caucasus. Once arrived in Egypt, the boys were brought up as Muslims, imbued with strict military discipline and trained in Mamluk fighting techniques. They were particularly renowned for their excellent cavalry and their horses were judged to be of especially high quality.

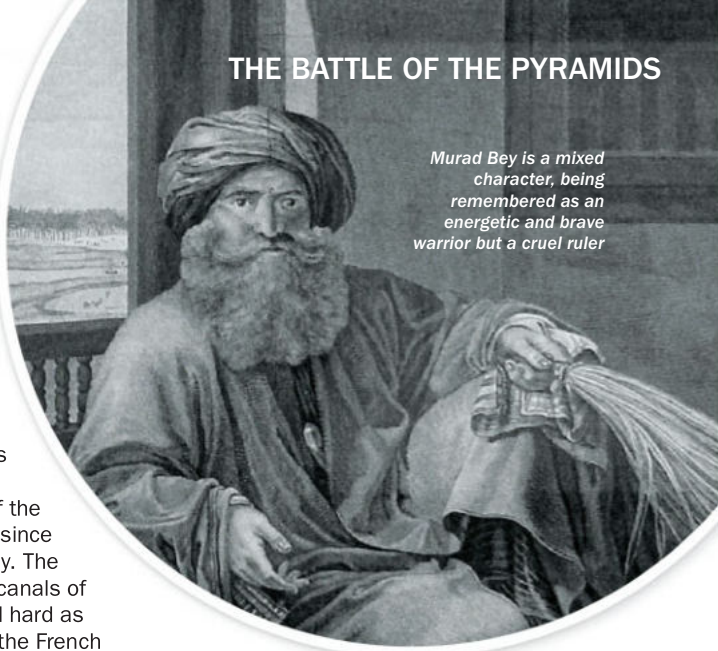
## On to Cairo

To win Egypt, Napoleon would have to seek out and defeat the Mamluk beys in Cairo. The southward march on the capital began on 3 July, with the division of General Louis-Charles Desaix in the lead, to be followed over the next few days by the other four divisions of the army. Sailing upstream on a parallel course along the Nile was a tiny flotilla of riverine craft under

Captain Jean-Baptiste Perrée.

Instead of following the twisting course of the Nile River, Napoleon decided instead that the journey was to be made overland, as this was a shorter and faster straight-line route. This also meant that the Army of the Orient was at times marching through true wilderness. At other times the soldiers moved through sections of agricultural land crossed by numerous irrigation ditches. These fields had once been inundated by the waters of the annual Nile flood, but these had long since receded, and the ground was bone-dry. The soil of the water-bearing ditches and canals of the Nile farm country had been baked hard as rock by the strong Egyptian sun, and the French sweated as they struggled to get their horse-drawn artillery over these impediments.

The daytime heat was nigh unbearable, and the discomfort of the French was exacerbated by the lack of drinking water. They also encountered a curious phenomenon while in the desert. It appeared to them that, in the distance, the land was inundated with water, only for them to soon discover that this was not so. This was their first encounter with the illusion known as a mirage. To add to French misery, the soldiers were harried mercilessly by flies and other insects. The men were desperately thirsty as they marched, finding relief only occasionally, as when they came across a field studded with watermelons and gobbled up the succulent, water-rich fruits. Devouring so much watermelon relieved the parched men of their thirst, but it also had the unfortunate side effect of giving them vicious bouts of diarrhoea.



*Murad Bey is a mixed character, being remembered as an energetic and brave warrior but a cruel ruler*

By 10 July, the five divisions had rendezvoused at El Ramaniyah, with Perrée's river flotilla arriving the next day. Intelligence reports came to Napoleon that one of the two Mamluk co-rulers of Egypt, Murad Bey was moving north from Cairo along the Nile's western bank with a small force of 3,000 Mamluk horsemen and 2,000 infantry attendants.

Murad was renowned for his ferocity and bravery. A contemporary Egyptian historian, Abd-al-Rahman al-Jabarti, wrote of him that he was "cruel and unjust, entertaining and conceited" and that he surrounded himself with men who were "hard, brave and cruel." Murad had been born in the Caucasus and taken into slavery from his village as a youngster, being brought to Egypt when he was about eight years old. When he had learned of the French invasion he asked if they were mounted.

*Modern French tactics saw that the fierce Mamluk charge quickly disintegrated into a slaughter*





Napoleon in fact had little cavalry with him and when told that the French army was on foot, Murad growled, "My men will destroy them and I will slice open their heads like watermelons in the fields."

Murad held a council with Ibrahim Bey, his colleague in governing Egypt. Where Murad was fierce and choleric, Ibrahim was cautious and calculating. They had quickly called up their troops, with Murad departing to meet Napoleon's men at Shubra Kit, where a small skirmish was fought on 13 July. Arraying their infantry in six-deep squares (in actuality, rectangles) with artillery set at the corners and a cloud of tirailleurs (skirmishing sharpshooters) surrounding them, the French were able to fend off the Mamluk cavalry.

The French were impressed by the splendid appearance of the enemy horsemen, with one writing that they "admired the fine air of these warriors, the speed of their horses, the audacity and composure of their movements." However, the disciplined, unflinching ranks of the squares were enough to keep them at a distance from French musketry. "Although they were the best cavalry in the world," wrote one French officer, "they disappeared after the first charge. They were not accustomed to seeing the four battalion squares we formed, one per division. They said all the French soldiers were attached to one another."

There were few casualties on either side, and Murad retreated faster than Napoleon could chase after him. After a long and wearying march, the French caught up with Murad on 20 July outside the village of Embaba, which lay on the west bank of the Nile across from Cairo. Murad Bey had gathered 6,000 Mamluk horsemen, 15,000 Egyptian infantry and 3,000 Bedouins. Murad placed his artillery, perhaps 40 cannon or so, within Embaba, together with a strong force of Ottoman Janissaries (these were the guard troops of the Ottoman pasha) and fellahin militia. He also deployed a flotilla on the Nile under the command of a Christian Greek, Nikola, to oppose the further progress of Perrée's squadron up the river.

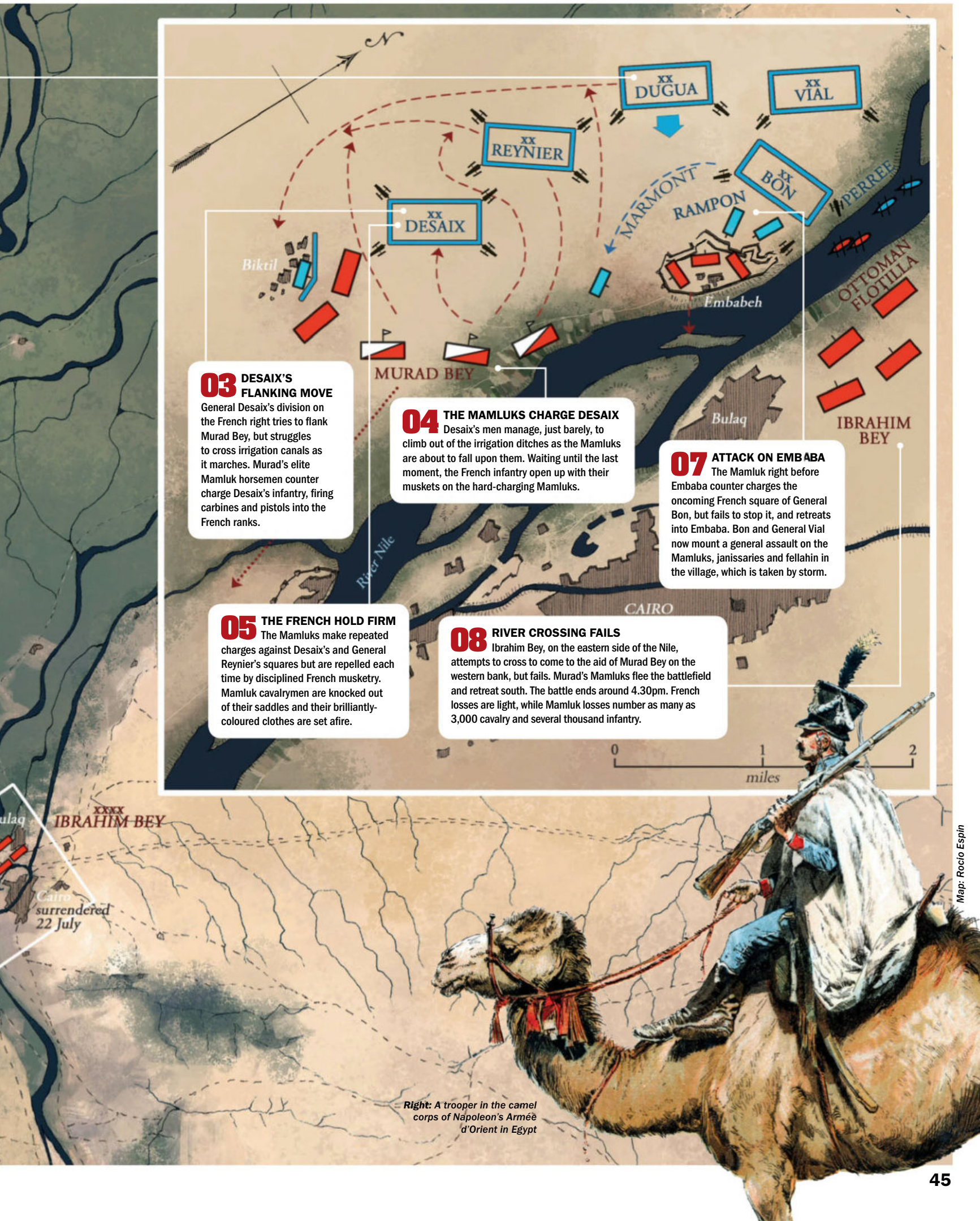
### Battle of the Pyramids

On the eastern side of the river, Ibrahim Bey had 1,000 Mamluk cavalry, some artillery and a few thousand infantry, many of them conscripts. Following behind these were a large group of women, children and spectators come to watch the battle. Napoleon would here benefit from Murad Bey's impetuous nature. Instead of crossing over to the eastern (Cairo-side) bank of the Nile to join his forces with those of Ibrahim Bey, he rashly confronted the French on his own on the western side. Napoleon would have had a much more difficult time if he had been compelled to make an

*The decorated sabre worn by Napoleon at the Battle of the Pyramids*







### 03 DESAIX'S FLANKING MOVE

General Desaix's division on the French right tries to flank Murad Bey, but struggles to cross irrigation canals as it marches. Murad's elite Mamluk horsemen counter charge Desaix's infantry, firing carbines and pistols into the French ranks.

### 04 THE MAMLUKS CHARGE DESAIX

Desaix's men manage, just barely, to climb out of the irrigation ditches as the Mamluks are about to fall upon them. Waiting until the last moment, the French infantry open up with their muskets on the hard-charging Mamluks.

### 07 ATTACK ON EMBABA

The Mamluk right before Embaba counter charges the oncoming French square of General Bon, but fails to stop it, and retreats into Embaba. Bon and General Vial now mount a general assault on the Mamluks, janissaries and fellahin in the village, which is taken by storm.

### 05 THE FRENCH HOLD FIRM

The Mamluks make repeated charges against Desaix's and General Reynier's squares but are repelled each time by disciplined French musketry. Mamluk cavalymen are knocked out of their saddles and their brilliantly-coloured clothes are set afire.

### 08 RIVER CROSSING FAILS

Ibrahim Bey, on the eastern side of the Nile, attempts to cross to come to the aid of Murad Bey on the western bank, but fails. Murad's Mamluks flee the battlefield and retreat south. The battle ends around 4.30pm. French losses are light, while Mamluk losses number as many as 3,000 cavalry and several thousand infantry.

XXXX  
IBRAHIM BEY  
Cairo  
surrendered  
22 July

Right: A trooper in the camel corps of Napoleon's Armée d'Orient in Egypt



**“A MAMLUK HORSEMAN WAS A VERITABLE ARSENAL, WITH EACH CARRYING A CARBINE, TWO OR THREE PISTOLS, A LANCE AND A SCIMITAR OF RAZOR-SHARP DAMASCUS STEEL”**



## THE SAVANTS

Accompanying Napoleon to Egypt was a small group of 167 scientists, engineers, architects, mapmakers and other scholars known as savants. Their mission was to survey the country and catalogue its many monuments. A good number of the savants were highly respected members of France's National Institute. These included the physicist Gaspard Monge; the mathematician Jean-Baptiste Joseph Fourier; and the artist Vivant Denon, whose book of drawings, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, would become a bestseller in Europe when published in 1802. Denon, through his illustrations, more than anyone else, was responsible bringing ancient Egyptian civilisation into vogue in the West. The savants as a whole would, after the expedition, produce *The Description of Egypt*, published in nine volumes between 1809 and 1822. *The Description of Egypt* is in some cases the only source we possess for certain temples and ruins that subsequently have been lost.

One unsolved puzzle left behind by the expedition was how to read the hieroglyphs found on ancient monuments all across the land. The Rosetta Stone had been found by Napoleon's soldiers but taken as a war spoil by the British. Many scholars used the text found on the stone – written in three different scripts: ancient Greek, hieroglyphs, and demotic Egyptian – to try to decipher Egypt's ancient written language. It fell to Jean-Francois Champollion to determine that the hieroglyphs were neither an alphabet, nor ideograms representing ideas, but a combination of both. He began making his insights known to the world in the 1820s, and his brilliant work allowed modern scholars to read Ancient Egyptian after a silence of many centuries.

Left: Vivant Denon was appointed as the first director of the Louvre museum



opposed river crossing to get to grips with the full Mamluk army.

In the early morning darkness of the next day, 21 July, the groggy French divisions marched out of camp in battle formation. When the sun came up, they could see Cairo ahead of them, beyond the mighty Nile, and they let out a “thousand cries of joy,” wrote Napoleon. By 2pm, the French army of about 25,000 came upon Embaba and took a short rest.

Napoleon spoke briefly to his men before going into action. “Forward!” he exhorted them, and indicating the Pyramids of Giza, which were readily visible even though 16 kilometres away, he said, “Remember that from those monuments yonder 40 centuries look down upon you!” He arranged his five divisions in a line, with each forming a square as at Shubra Khit. Desaix's division was set on the extreme right flank; beside this was General Jean-Louis Ebenezer Reynier's division. That of General Charles Dugua was in the middle of the line, with General Honoré Vial's division beside his. On the far left, anchoring the French line on the Nile in front of Embaba, was the division of General Louis André Bon.

Desaix attempted an enveloping move around Murad Bey's left flank. Seeing this, Murad quickly charged the division with an enormous force of galloping horsemen. Desaix's square had fallen out of formation as it pressed forward over irrigation canals and through clusters of palm trees. Just as his men had climbed up from a canal, they saw the glittering Mamluk cavalry bearing down on them. A

Mamluk horseman was a veritable arsenal, with each carrying a carbine, two or three pistols, a lance and a scimitar of razor-sharp Damascus steel. The French scarcely had time to reform their lines before the Mamluks fired their carbines and discharged their pistols, tossing the latter aside to be picked up by their infantry attendants running behind them. Whistling lead musket balls hurtled into the French ranks, but still they held their fire, waiting until the Mamluks had closed to point-blank range before they opened up on the enemy.

The French volley tore through the Mamluks; blasting riders clear out of their saddles. The scimitar-wielding horsemen continued to attack, making repeated assaults on Desaix's square. The Mamluks were very brave, but their Medieval tactics were not up to the challenge of contending with the disciplined French squares. Their bold charges were haphazard and lacked the concentrated punch to be effective. In courage they were unexcelled, but that was not enough. Time and again Murad's men rode hard at either Desaix's or Reynier's nearby square, only to be cut down by French musketry or impaled by bayonets. Wounded Mamluk riders and horses tumbled over onto the French. Others had their clothes set alight by burning wads expelled by French muskets. The bodies of the slain began to pile up around the squares as the day wore on, but the French remained resolute. It was imperative that they hold steady; to break would allow the Mamluks to charge within their disordered lines and commence a slaughter. Reynier would say of





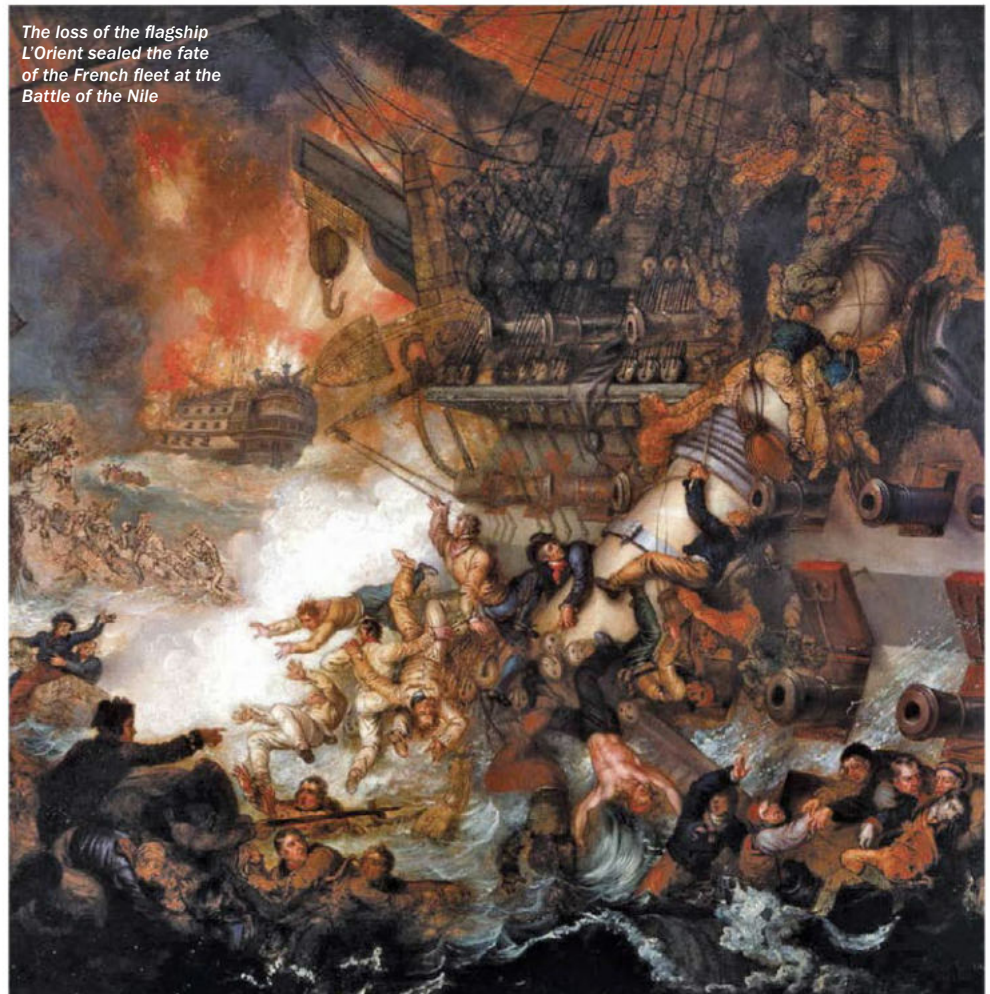
This painting of the battle was produced by Louis-François Lejeune, a later general in Napoleon's army

his battered division that, "I have never known officers and men, holding themselves in line, who had conducted themselves better."

The Mamluks continued to assail the French squares, including that of Dugua in the centre, but could make no impression. Struck by fire from all sides, they retreated. On his left, Napoleon ordered an assault on the enemy positions in Embaba. The cavalry of the Mamluk right, which had not yet been involved in the fighting, made a charge against the oncoming French. They could do little against Bon's square, and with their route back partially obstructed by Vial's division, they retreated into Embaba. A general attack was then launched by Bon and Vial against Embaba, where the Ottoman Janissaries and fellahin militia were stationed. These positions were taken by storm. Murad Bey and the surviving Mamluk cavalry, about 3,000, fled the field and made for their strongholds further south.

Along the Nile, all was chaos. Ibrahim Bey had tried to cross to come to the aid of Murad, but his boats became tangled up with those of some of Murad's men who were trying to escape to the eastern bank. A heavy wind

**"THEIR BOLD CHARGES WERE HAPHAZARD AND LACKED THE CONCENTRATED PUNCH TO BE EFFECTIVE"**



The loss of the flagship L'Orient sealed the fate of the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile

came up suddenly and squelched any chance of getting over to help the Mamluks already engaged against the French. With the battle clearly lost, Ibrahim Bey, with the Ottoman pasha in tow, would escape from Cairo.

Fighting came to an end around 4.30pm. In about two hours, Napoleon had trounced the Mamluk army. Cairo was his, and he would spend the night in Murad Bey's palace on the Nile. French losses were small, just 29 dead and about 260 wounded, while Mamluk losses were far heavier, around 2,000 horsemen slain along with a few thousand of the fellahin. Ever conscious of his image, Napoleon would name his victory not after the village of Embaba, where the fighting took place, but after the more distant Pyramids, sensing that it would make for a grander legacy.

### Reversal at Aboukir Bay

Despite the resounding victory won at the Pyramids, any long-term possibility of success for Napoleon's Egyptian venture evaporated just a month after his landing. The blow would be delivered, not by the Mamluks, however, nor by the Ottoman Turks, but by the Royal Navy. Admiral Nelson had continued to search in vain for the French expeditionary fleet while it was en route to Egypt. On 1 August, he finally caught up to it in Aboukir Bay just outside Alexandria. Ever aggressive, Nelson attacked. The French fleet was broken by the next morning, with Admiral Brueys slain, and the flagship L'Orient consumed in a gigantic fireball when fire touched its powder magazine.

The Army of the Orient's maritime link to France had been cut in a single stroke, making resupply impossible because of the ensuing British blockade. Napoleon blamed his admirals for the defeat, and they may have been mainly to blame, but his aura of invincibility had been dispelled and spurred the formation of the anti-French Second Coalition of Britain, Russia, Naples, Austria, Portugal and the Ottoman Empire soon afterward. Napoleon's expedition to Egypt would eventually founder over the next two years in Egypt and Syria amid continuing conflict with the Ottoman Empire and Britain, as well as troubles with the native Egyptians who would never reconcile themselves to the presence of the alien French. In August 1800, Napoleon secretly left Egypt, leaving his troops behind. The surviving members of the ill-fated expeditionary army would surrender to the British in September 1801 in return for safe passage back to France. The Egyptian adventure had come to an ignominious end, but Napoleon's star would soon shine even more brightly, with his career having more than a decade to run before his final defeat at Waterloo.

### FURTHER READING

- ★ NAPOLEON'S EGYPT 1798-1801 BY JUAN COLE
- ★ EGYPTOMANIA BY BOB BRIER
- ★ CAMPAIGNS OF NAPOLEON BY DAVID CHANDLER
- ★ NAPOLEON IN EGYPT BY PAUL STRATHERN



## EASTERN FRONT 1917

*Russian troops, attempting to reach the German lines are killed by enemy fire as they attempt to breach the barbed wire entanglements, c.1917*







EASTERN FRONT 1917

# GRAVE OF RUSSIA'S IMPERIAL ARMY

WORDS STEVE ROBERTS

It saw the most casualties in WWI, yet the Eastern Front is often overlooked, subsumed in the narrative of revolution and civil war

**I**t was a Pyrrhic victory with nearly one million casualties, half of these lying dead on the battlefield, yet Russia's high watermark on the Eastern Front in WWI came with a savage battle with Austria-Hungary in Carpathia, which almost knocked the latter out of the war.

The Brusilov Offensive – the only campaign of the Great War named after an individual, Aleksei Brusilov – was fought between June and September 1916, and saw the eponymous general almost pulling off the spectacular, only to be thwarted by a combination of Austria-Hungary's allies bailing them out and Romania proving to be a weak cog. Instead of anchoring the Russian line in the south, the Romanian rout resulted in a general retreat, a collapsing situation only saved by the onset of winter. This could have been the fulfilment of Russian chief-of-staff General Mikhail Alekseev's vision, at the start of 1916, that a concerted effort could knock Austria-Hungary out of the war.

The combination of the summer losses and morale-sap of Russian divisions being sent into Romania to stem the Central Powers' advance there, proved too much for the Imperial Russian Army. If there were a moment when the collective Russian will was broken, it was here; a near triumph that turned into another debilitating setback. Ironically, the Russians had cultivated Romania, believing it would be an asset in any Galician campaign; it proved to be anything but.

Significantly in October 1916, small anti-war incidents began to occur in some Russian corps, and Maurice Paleologue, the French ambassador to the court of Russian Tsar Nicholas II, reported

that, "...war-weariness and food shortages caused disorders throughout many Russian cities in the autumn of 1916. They were the heralds of the Revolution of 1917." Factories in Petrograd went on strike and when French Renault workers tried to continue working, they were set upon by strikers. The police called in the infantry, who sided with the strikers, leaving the Cossacks to restore order.

When war had first broken out, Russia, in common with other belligerents, optimistically believed it would be brief and victorious. For this reason, it failed to factor in how material and human replacements for those expended would be produced and deployed. A lack of ammunition would soon hit crisis point.

Unlike the industrial nations, the country did not have a reserve of manufacturing that could be turned over to war production, or an effective bureaucracy to co-ordinate the effort. As well as (mostly) incompetent officers, the Russians suffered from a lack of everything – particularly artillery – required to wage a modern war. The only thing it had in abundance was manpower. A Russian division in 1914 numbered in the region of 15,000 men. Upon mobilisation, Russia's army totalled 115 infantry and 38 cavalry divisions (around 2,300,000 men), but with only around 8,000 artillery pieces. The difficulty the Russians faced with such an extensive front and so many opponents was illustrated by fewer than 30 per cent of its available divisions lining up against the Germans in the north.

With the war going badly and unrest increasing, Nicholas II may have regretted his decision of September 1915 to relieve Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievich of supreme



command. The tsar had taken over at this point, ignoring warnings that he could not be both soldier and statesman.

Although he proposed to act only as a figurehead, with Mikhail Alekseev controlling the army, his name would nevertheless become indelibly linked with failure, as illustrated by recriminations following the heavy losses sustained at the Battle of Lake Naroch in March-April 1916, an inconclusive Russian offensive aiming solely to relieve the pressure of the Germans at Verdun. As General Aleksandr Noskoff lamented, "Our losses were very high, numbering some 250,000. The sacrifices resulted from the personal intervention of Emperor Nicholas II." His absences at the front also meant that a clique, centred round the Germanic tsarina and the mystic-healer-meddler Rasputin, were in effective control of the government, further fuelling the amorphous discontent.

As 1916 drew to its miserable conclusion, more than a dozen regiments mutinied, with soldiers reported to be deserting in their thousands every single day. The tsar appeared incapable of controlling either the army or the government and even the murder of Rasputin cured little, suggesting instead that Russia was descending into a state of near-anarchy.

With Christmas approaching, the Russian military effort switched to the north, with an offensive planned by the Russian 12th Army (Northern Front) and Latvian units in the area of Jelgava (Latvia). Having failed to break the Austro-Hungarians, the Russians were going to have another ill-advised crack at the Germans, under General Radko Dimitriev.

World War I was a war of alliances and it was often the case for Russia that it launched an offensive due to pressure from the other Entente members. The so-called 'Christmas Battles' of late-December 1916 were a case in point. The order to attack the German 8th Army on the Riga front was given in order to attract German reserve forces, thereby relieving the pressure on the French at Verdun (Brusilov had suffered in the same way with his summer offensive, when his attack went in earlier than he'd wanted because of Italian appeals to distract the Austrians in Trentino).

The 8th Army had been held up near Riga for more than a year since October 1915, digging itself in thereafter and fortifying a 30-kilometre-long 'wall' – the grandiloquently-dubbed German Wall – constructed largely from wood and sand, which lay waiting for the Russians. The wall was built across the Tirelpuvrs (or Tirelis Swamp), so was a potential nightmare

for any force brave, or stupid, enough to try to take it. Mid-December saw a fall in temperature to an eye-watering (or eye-freezing) -35°C, however, it enabled the now-frozen swamp to be crossed, and the German fortifications could now be assaulted.

Determined to surprise their enemy, the Russians planned the attack for 23 December, believing that so close to Christmas, the Germans would be off-guard. The ultimate objective was Jelgava (or Mitau), a rail and road junction south west of Riga, in central Latvia. The main assault force would be VI Siberian Rifle Corps, which included two Latvian rifle brigades.

The attack duly began early that morning. As well as the surprise of the season, there was also no artillery support, which would have given the Germans advanced warning of an impending attack. By comparison, the received wisdom on the Western Front dictated a frontal assault proceeded by a huge, usually ineffective, barrage.

Sadly for the Russians, after all this planning, the attack stalled as the Germans fed in reinforcements and everything that could go wrong, did. The 17th Siberian Regiment refused to attack, a mutiny supported by several other units and then with the offensive faltering, the Germans counter-attacked. A further Russian attack on Christmas Day itself took a fortified hill (later known as Machine Gun Hill) on the northern side of the swamp, but the commander failed to anticipate this success, so the victory could not be exploited. By 29

**"THE TSAR HAD TAKEN OVER AT THIS POINT, IGNORING WARNINGS THAT HE COULD NOT BE BOTH FIGHTING SOLDIER AND STATESMAN"**

*Russian infantry being mobilised shortly before the outbreak of war. Many would lose their life in the ensuing carnage*





# FOES OF THE MOTHERLAND

NICHOLAS II FACED AN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TASK OPPOSING MULTIPLE NATIONS HUNGRY FOR VICTORY

WWI's Eastern Front was never as simple as Russians and Germans going hammer and tongs. When Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Russia was duty-bound to defend her Slavic ally. In addition, Russia faced a militaristic Germany, which honoured its alliance with Austria-Hungary. So the Russians waged war over a 1,600-kilometre-front that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, encompassing both Germany and Austria-Hungary. If that was not enough, Turkey joined the Central Powers later

in 1914, giving the Russians a third opponent from November. Three became four in September 1915, when Bulgaria threw in its lot with the Central Powers. Still smarting from defeat by Serbia in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria saw a way of recovering its losses, especially with Serbia's protector, Russia, getting pummelled elsewhere. As the 1916 campaigning season dawned, Nicholas II saw enemies around every corner, and we haven't even mentioned the Polish Legions.

## GERMANY



While Russia always squared up well to Austria-Hungary,

it found Germany a different proposition and the final blow came in August-September 1914, with crushing defeats at Tannenberg and 1st Masurian Lakes. Germany's Schlieffen Plan failed, however, which left it fighting a war on two fronts and unable to field sufficient divisions in the east to defeat Russia. The Russian territory proved too big for Germany's army, its last attempt in September 1917, taking the northernmost end of the Russian Front in the Riga Offensive.

## TURKEY



Turkey joined the Central Powers in August

1914 and two months later its warships bombed Russia's Black Sea Coast. Russia's offensives against the Turks occurred in two theatres, Western Persia and Armenia. In January 1915, Russia appealed to Britain for a diversion to relieve the pressure on them in the Caucasus; one of the reasons behind the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign. Russia had the upper hand in late 1916/early 1917, but the Revolution saw it start to withdraw from Western Persia.

## BULGARIA



Bulgaria's defeat at the hands of Serbia and Greece

in 1913 left it thirsting for revenge. Initially neutral, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in September 1915, sensing an opportunity to achieve its ambition of a Greater Bulgaria, which would include the Serbian territory of Macedonia. Bulgaria would quickly declare war on Serbia. During 1916, Bulgaria attacked Greece and then Romania, which had sided with the Allies. Bulgarian troops advanced into Dobruja in August where they were opposed by Romanian and Russian troops.

## POLISH LEGIONS



Poland did not exist as an independent state during WWI, Polish

'territory' was instead split between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. The Poles looked to support the likely winners, gaining concessions and a promise of future autonomy in return for loyalty and recruits. Colonel Józef Piłsudski (future Polish chief-of-state) foresaw the war ruining all three empires and chose the Central Powers as his bedfellows, forming the Polish Legions to fight Russia. The Brusilov Offensive saw Austria-Hungary's Polish Legions defying Russia at the Battle of Kostiuchówka.

## AUSTRIA-HUNGARY



The moribund dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary facing

Russia throughout the war offered the Russians their best chance of success. Unfortunately, the knock-out blow eluded them, partly due to Russian failings and partly due to the Germans' formidable clout entering the ring at just the right moment. This is well-illustrated by the Brusilov Offensive of June-September 1916, which came close to knocking Austria-Hungary out of the war, until 15 German divisions arrived from the west to put an end to the nonsense.

**"SADLY FOR THE RUSSIANS, AFTER ALL THIS PLANNING, THE ATTACK STALLED AS THE GERMANS FED IN REINFORCEMENTS AND EVERYTHING THAT COULD GO WRONG DID"**



Below: Two of the Russian guns captured by the Germans at the Swedish-built fortress of Dunamunde, Riga (now in Latvia), c.1917



Damaged buildings in Riga, the capital city of Latvia, following its capture by the German Eighth Army







*Crammed into a rear guard trench, Russian infantry await a German offensive*

December, the Russian attempt on the German Wall had petered out; another indecisive battle and another instance of what might have been for the Russians.

The following month saw an 8th Army counterattack, and in the conventional manner, with an artillery barrage preceding an infantry attack. Latvians and Siberians defended their positions for three days, but Russian attempts to counterattack failed, so the Germans recovered 80 per cent of the ground they had lost, although Machine Gun Hill remained in Russian hands.

With temperatures dropping further to -38°C, the fighting stopped, with both sides literally at a frozen standstill. The Latvian rifle brigades suffered around 8,000 of the Russian losses of some 13,000, the heavy casualties fostering further discontent against Russian generals and the tsar, who was nominally in charge of this debacle. Siberians who had refused to fight were punished, some paying with their lives, others, ironically, carted off to Siberia. Meanwhile, support for the Bolsheviks rose.

The Christmas Battles, fought over the winter of 1916-17, were almost a microcosm of the Eastern Front as a whole, with the two combatants fighting to an exhausted standoff. While they considered what to do next, the strategists increasingly viewed the Eastern Front as a sideshow to what was going on further west. For both sides, however, it remained important. Just the fact it was there, and unresolved, meant the Germans could not transfer large numbers of troops west.

After the initial optimism and enthusiasm for war, marked by an intensity of hatred towards all things German and a love of mother-Russia and its tsar, the nation was fast tracking towards Revolution, civil war and the Bolshevik consolidation of power. That glorious autumn of 1914, when everything appeared possible, seemed an awfully long way off now. The loyalist days, when the German embassy in Saint Petersburg was trashed and the German-sounding city was renamed Petrograd, seemed otherworldly. In those days, there had been no defeatism (unlike at the time of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905), just a steady determination to fight and a belief in ultimate victory, with the sidelining of anything that might interfere. Former Prime Minister Count Sergei Witte had been one of the few prescient souls predicting that war would inevitably bring revolution. With the failure of the Christmas Battles, plotters circled like crows around carrion.

The Russians may have been failing militarily, but it would be wrong to view their efforts as simply inept, with callous leaders and generals sending ill-equipped cannon-fodder to its collective death, as has often been depicted. Winston Churchill showed an understanding of the Russian psyche. "Withdrawn into their own country [the



*A political meeting held among Russian soldiers on eastern front in May, after the first revolution of 1917*

**"THAT GLORIOUS AUTUMN OF 1914, WHEN EVERYTHING APPEARED POSSIBLE, SEEMED AN AWFULLY LONG WAY OFF NOW"**





# EASTERN FRONT 1914-1918

FARTHEST RUSSIAN ADVANCE 1914

FRONT AT TIME OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

FARTHEST AUSTRO-GERMAN ADVANCE 1918

STATE BORDERS

## RUSSIA'S FRONT LINE

THE EASTERN FRONT WAS THE WAR EVERYONE EXPECTED, ONE OF MOVEMENT AND BREAKTHROUGHS; THE ONLY SURPRISE WAS THAT IT WAS NOT DECIDED QUICKLY

Whereas the Western Front quickly became the war of attrition, with front lines barely shifting in four years, the Eastern Front was more reminiscent of wars past, as armies swept backwards and forwards. Churchill articulated the nub of the problem when he said: "In the east, the land was too big for the armies." No one looked remotely capable of achieving a knockout blow.

In a familiar gambit, Russia traded space and lives for time. In the north, Germans and Russians faced one another across a front that extended south from the Baltic with two noticeable salients, the northernmost German territory (East Prussia), including the 1914 battlefields of Tannenberg and 1st Masurian Lakes. Directly below this was the westernmost part of Russia, jutting out between East Prussia and Galicia like a stubby thumb, with Warsaw at its heart. The theatre that Austria-Hungary and Russia contested in yo-yo fashion, Galicia, followed and below

this, Carpathia. The front continued towards the Black Sea, courtesy of Bulgaria and Romania joining the war on opposing sides. The Romanians proved a liability for the Russians as the Bulgarians poured into Dobruja, seizing the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanza and crossing the River Danube into Wallachia.

Turkey's entry into the war gave Russia another wholly different front to contest, betwixt the eastern side of the Black Sea and the Caspian. It was not just the Germans fighting on multiple fronts. Russia, pressured to attack because of early German successes in the west, ended up attacking Austria-Hungary in southern Poland and Galicia, and then the Germans, firstly in East Prussia and then north from Warsaw. It was inconceivable that the Russians, manpower heavy but material light, could sustain warfare on all these fronts with their obvious shortage of rifles, artillery, ammunition and clothing.



# IN THE RANKS OF REVOLUTION

IN ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF MODERN HISTORY, RUSSIA BECAME THE BIRTHPLACE OF COMMUNIST REVOLUTION AFTER IT FELL APART IN WORLD WAR I

The Imperial Government fell in the February Revolution and was followed by a period of awkward power-sharing between the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviets before the October Revolution ended Russia's brief flirtation with democracy, installing the world's first Communist dictatorship. The Provisional Government's determination to honour its treaty obligations and continue fighting the Allies' war guaranteed its downfall. As the Bolsheviks promised peace, they gained popularity as the only opposition party promising no compromise.

The Russian army continued functioning between the revolutions, illustrated by the July Offensive and resistance to Germany's Riga Offensive. Russia fought the Turks too, with an advance in Western Persia in March 1917. The Soviets were increasingly influential, however, so there were equal examples of troops refusing to bear arms.

The second revolution meant decision time for the army; for or against. The bulk of the rank and file was sick of war, so supported the new rulers.

They embraced the Bolsheviks' 'Red Army' – majority discontents led by minority radicals who had engineered revolution. Opposing them was the 'Whites' – officers, cossacks, bourgeoisie, disinherited political groups; a rag-tag polyglot who could not accept the new regime.

The Bolsheviks set about bringing their involvement in WWI to an end. A precarious armistice was declared on the Eastern Front in December 1917, and as arguments raged about terms, Red Army founder Leon Trotsky declared the war over ahead of a formal peace. Germany recommenced hostilities a week later, advancing to within 160 kilometres of Petrograd. At Lenin's insistence, the Bolsheviks resumed negotiations. The punitive peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed in March, but fighting continued as Germany supported Whites against Reds, for example, in Ukraine and Finland. Although other nations also lent support, the Reds' internal following saw them through, although the civil war lasted into the 1920s and cost hundreds of thousands more Russian lives.

**“THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT’S DETERMINATION TO HONOUR ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS AND CONTINUE FIGHTING THE ALLIES’ WAR GUARANTEED ITS DOWNFALL”**

Important figures like General Kornilov opposed the revolution. He led a failed coup against the Petrograd Soviet and was killed in the ensuing conflict



Russians] can hold their own," which was particularly true once the Germans went beyond the railway communications, which they relied on for supply and mobility. The Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sandhurst's view that Russia at this time was, "good for nothing, or worse," was quite wide of the mark.

The inspired common-sense of Brusilov is a case in point. His summer 1916 offensive showed tactical nous that is often overlooked. The offensive was over a much larger front than previous Russian attacks, with offensives staged in many places up and down the front to confuse the enemy. This was in stark contrast to previous attacks, which targeted small areas with massed forces. Attempts were made to mask the Russian intentions, artillery was advanced covertly and the duration of the bombardment was deliberately limited (and monitored from the air), as artillery and infantry attempted to co-ordinate. The front line trenches were moved as close as possible to the enemy's before 'zero hour', with infantry having already practiced on mock-ups of the German positions. There was also a strategic reserve, ready to exploit any incursion into enemy positions.

Brusilov deserved to succeed, but was not favoured with the commodity essential to all great generals: luck. He now argued for the tsar's abdication, but also the continuance of the war. Tellingly, it was the Bolsheviks who caught the popular mood by calling for an end to the carnage. Brusilov was worth accommodating though – he would go on to work for the Bolsheviks after the war.

When the February Revolution occurred, it saw the tsar scapegoated, forced to abdicate and replaced by the Provisional Government. After two years of military reverses and food shortages, few can have been surprised at the combustible eruption when police fired on striking workers in Petrograd; few outside the aloof royal family anyway.

The new foreign minister, Pavel Miliukov, was in favour of continuing with the war in the hope of realising national aspirations. The same was true of Alexander Kerensky, Socialist Revolutionary leader, minister of war and future prime minister, who hoped to outflank the Bolsheviks by galvanising the nation into a fresh military effort based on a French-revolutionary style 'nation in arms' and 'democratisation' of Russia's forces. Success on the battlefield would quell dissent at home. The novice leaders of a fledgling Russian democracy would fail, however, on the question of the war's prosecution and the relaxation of military discipline merely opening up the army to Vladimir's Lenin's anti-war propaganda. They would not be the first (or the last) set of politicians to mistakenly assume that wars would be popular and binding. For the tsar, meanwhile, it was now all about staying alive.

The Provisional Government was already on borrowed time as it competed with the workers' soviets (councils) for hearts and minds. Order



*Above: A long column of Russian soldiers marches towards the front lines, c.1917*

Number 1 of the Petrograd Soviet stipulated that control over all arms now vested in soldiers' soviets, elected by the troops. The Provisional Government found itself in the unedifying position of effectively power-sharing with the soviet, which controlled large sections of the army and navy in and around Petrograd. The soviet also controlled the railway, postal and telegraph services and gave orders to soldiers and key personnel without the say-so of the government.

Traditional military discipline was broken and most soldiers were now on strike against any hostile action and the Russian war machine virtually ground to a halt. The German enemy, meanwhile, played fifth columnist, assisting Lenin and his acolytes to return to Russia from

**“BRUSILOV DESERVED TO SUCCEED, BUT WAS NOT FAVOURED WITH THE COMMODITY ESSENTIAL TO ALL GREAT GENERALS: LUCK”**



*The prime minister of the Russian Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky (marked with x), visits Russian troops at the front in September 1917*



## EASTERN FRONT 1917

*Wary of incoming artillery fire, Russian soldiers keep watch for enemy movement*

**“THE RAPID DISINTEGRATION PROVED THAT RUSSIAN ARMY MORALE NO LONGER EXISTED AND THAT NO RUSSIAN OFFICER COULD COUNT ON HIS SOLDIERS”**

*In this grizzly scene, a Russian soldier wanders through the frozen dead in the aftermath of a battle*



*Russian troops parading in front of Alexander Kerensky, July 1917*



exile so they could foment revolution and disrupt, if not end, Russia's commitment to the war. Crucially, Lenin promised an end to the fighting.

Given these circumstances, it is surprising Russia managed one more attack on the Galician Front when Brusilov launched the great July Offensive, or Kerensky Offensive as it has also been dubbed. Commencing on 1 July, this encompassed the ten-day Battle of East Galicia, as the Russians moved towards Lviv in today's western Ukraine.

Early success began with an unusually heavy bombardment, with inroads made against the Austro-Hungarians, but not against the more resilient Germans. Russian losses mounted, causing demoralisation. The broken-reed of the Romanians reared its head again for a Russo-Romanian attack in support of the offensive, which initially broke through at Mărăști. Soldiers' committees discussed whether officers' orders should be obeyed, mass desertions occurred, and any officers trying to stand in the way were shot. By 16 July, the Russian advance had collapsed.

Led by German General Felix von Bothmer, a combination of Germans and Austrians began pushing the Russians back from 19 July, as their counterattack re-took the likes of Halicz, an important railhead point on the River Dniester in today's western Ukraine, as well as Tarnopol and Czernowitz, both close to the Austro-Hungarian-Russian border in Galicia and Carpathia respectively. There was little Russian resistance as they marched through Galicia

and Ukraine. By 20 July, the Russian line had broken and by 23 July they had retreated 240 kilometres. The rapid disintegration proved that Russian army morale no longer existed and that no Russian officer could count on his soldiers. Brusilov would be replaced by Lavr Kornilov, but it mattered not. The last Russian offensive of WWI ended in failure. As Churchill sensed, the war was to be ended, "...by the exhaustion of nations rather than the victories of armies."

Unfortunately for the Russians, the attack was poorly timed, with increasing demands for peace, especially from within the army. Meanwhile, Kerensky was fixed on fulfilling obligations towards his allies, which hardly motivated the Russian soldiery to fight. He needed a victory to restore the soldiers' morale and find popular favour, thereby strengthening his Provisional Government, which faced increasing rancour because of food shortages and rising prices. He gambled on a turn of the die and lost, severely denting the latent democracy's credibility in the process and leaving it fatally weakened as military reverses kick-started the July Days, when soldiers and workers rioted in Petrograd against the Provisional Government.

There was still more fighting between Germans and Russians at the northernmost end of the Eastern Front, where the Christmas Battles had taken place almost a year before. Early in September, The Battle of Riga saw the Germans capture the city in an offensive, which saw them take this end of the front in the final

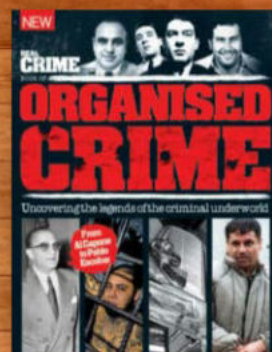
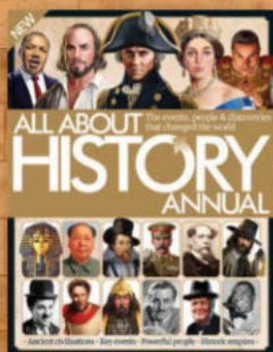
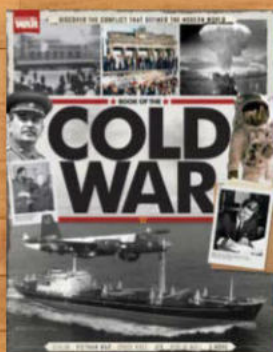
battle between soldiers of the two nations. Russian soldiers defending Kiev, however, refused to fight and fled from their adversaries.

Meanwhile, Kornilov, unhappy with the Provisional Government's plans, marched on Petrograd as the leader of a counter-revolutionary movement aiming to firstly take control of the government, then smash the power of the soviet. In a curious case of 'poacher turned gamekeeper', the Bolsheviks' Red Guard was asked by the government to help defend the city. Kornilov's bid for power, which might have nipped Bolshevism in the bud, was defeated and he was arrested on Kerensky's say-so. The Bolsheviks' popularity increased further as a result of this crisis and they rapidly orchestrated their seizure of power. Some soldiers supported them and others refused to fight for the government. Within a year, the Russian state had morphed from semi-autocracy, to democracy, to the world's first Communist dictatorship as a result of the October Revolution. Tsar Nicholas II paid for taking his ill-prepared nation to war with his life, assassinated by the Bolsheviks in July 1918 along with the rest of his immediate family.

Russia's World War I experience seems lost today, an historical afterthought, a mere footnote to the stupendous events of the Revolution. Churchill called it right when he termed it 'The Unknown War'. Unknown, rather than overlooked, but perhaps this is changing as historians start to show more interest in WWI's Eastern Front in its own right.

*Images: Alamy, Getty, Thinkstock*





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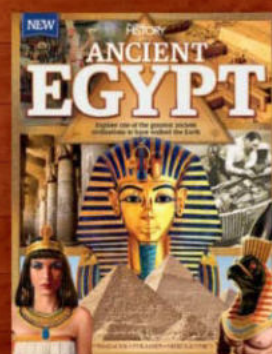
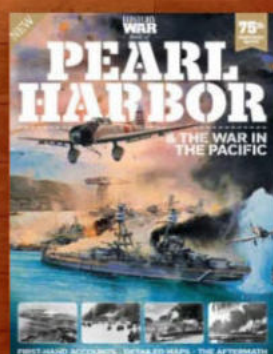
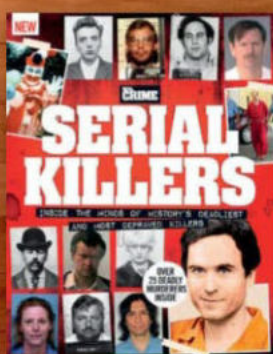
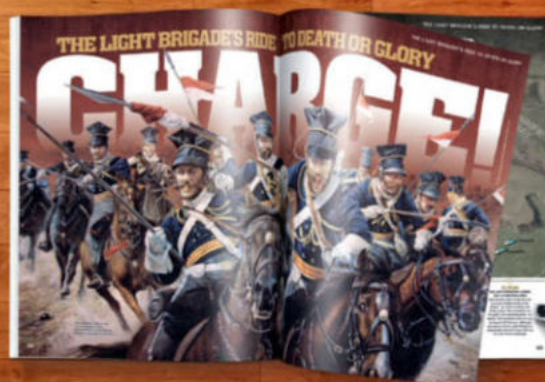
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# RENAULT CHAR D1

The Char D1 was conceived as a light infantry support tank to modernise the armoured force of the French Army

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

*Right: This NC-27, an export version of the eventual Renault Char D1, is the only remaining example of the tank series known to exist*





Although it bears some similarities to its predecessor, the FT-17, the Renault Char D1 represents the awakening of French tank design



**“THE CHAR D1 ENTERED SERVICE WITH THE FRENCH ARMY IN 1932. BY THE TIME PRODUCTION CEASED IN 1935, A TOTAL OF 160 HAD BEEN MANUFACTURED”**

In the wake of World War I, the French Army possessed the largest number of armoured vehicles in the world; however, peacetime budget constraints stifled the development and production of new armoured vehicles until the mid-1920s. Although the Renault FT-17 was the most advanced tank of World War I, it became apparent soon enough that a new light infantry support tank was a prerequisite to future French military preparedness during the interwar years.

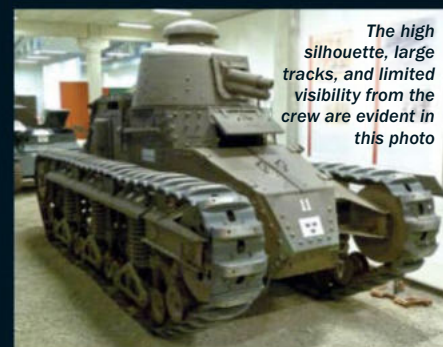
When the French military issued specifications for a cost-effective and efficient infantry support tank in 1923, Renault responded initially with attempts to upgrade its renowned FT-17 design, which had introduced the 360-degree rotating turret and placement of the engine in the rear of the chassis. The results were less than satisfactory.

By 1928, the company had committed to a major retooling of its earlier NC project. In the spring of 1929, the army ordered ten prototypes of the Renault NC-3, later designated the Char D. The early Char D was upgraded with a 74-horsepower, 6.08-litre, four-cylinder Renault engine, a robust six-speed manual transmission, a 165-litre fuel tank and other improvements. Its main weapon was the 47mm SA34 L30 gun, with secondary Reibel 7.5mm machine guns mounted coaxially and in the bow. As the first Char D was undergoing trials, orders for two advanced prototypes were received. These were designated the D2 and D3, while the earliest model became the D1.

Renault concluded a contract with the French government in late 1930 for 70 vehicles, and production began the following year. In July 1932, a second contract was signed for 30 tanks, and in October 1933, a final run of 50 was authorised. The Char D1 entered service with the French Army in 1932. By the time production ceased in 1935, a total of 160 had been manufactured.

## RENAULT CHAR D1

**COMMISSIONED:** 1930 **ORIGIN:** FRANCE  
**LENGTH:** 4.81 METRES **WIDTH:** 2.16 METRES  
**HEIGHT:** 2.4 METRES **RANGE:** 90 KILOMETRES  
**WEIGHT:** 13.8 TONS **CREW:** 3  
**ENGINE:** RENAULT 6.08-LITRE, 74-HP V-4 GASOLINE  
**ARMOUR:** TURRET 30MM; HULL 30MM; TOP 10MM;  
**UNDERSIDE:** 10MM  
**PRIMARY WEAPON:** 47MM SA34 L30 GUN  
**SECONDARY WEAPON:** 2 X REIBEL 7.5MM MACHINE GUNS



*The high silhouette, large tracks, and limited visibility from the crew are evident in this photo*



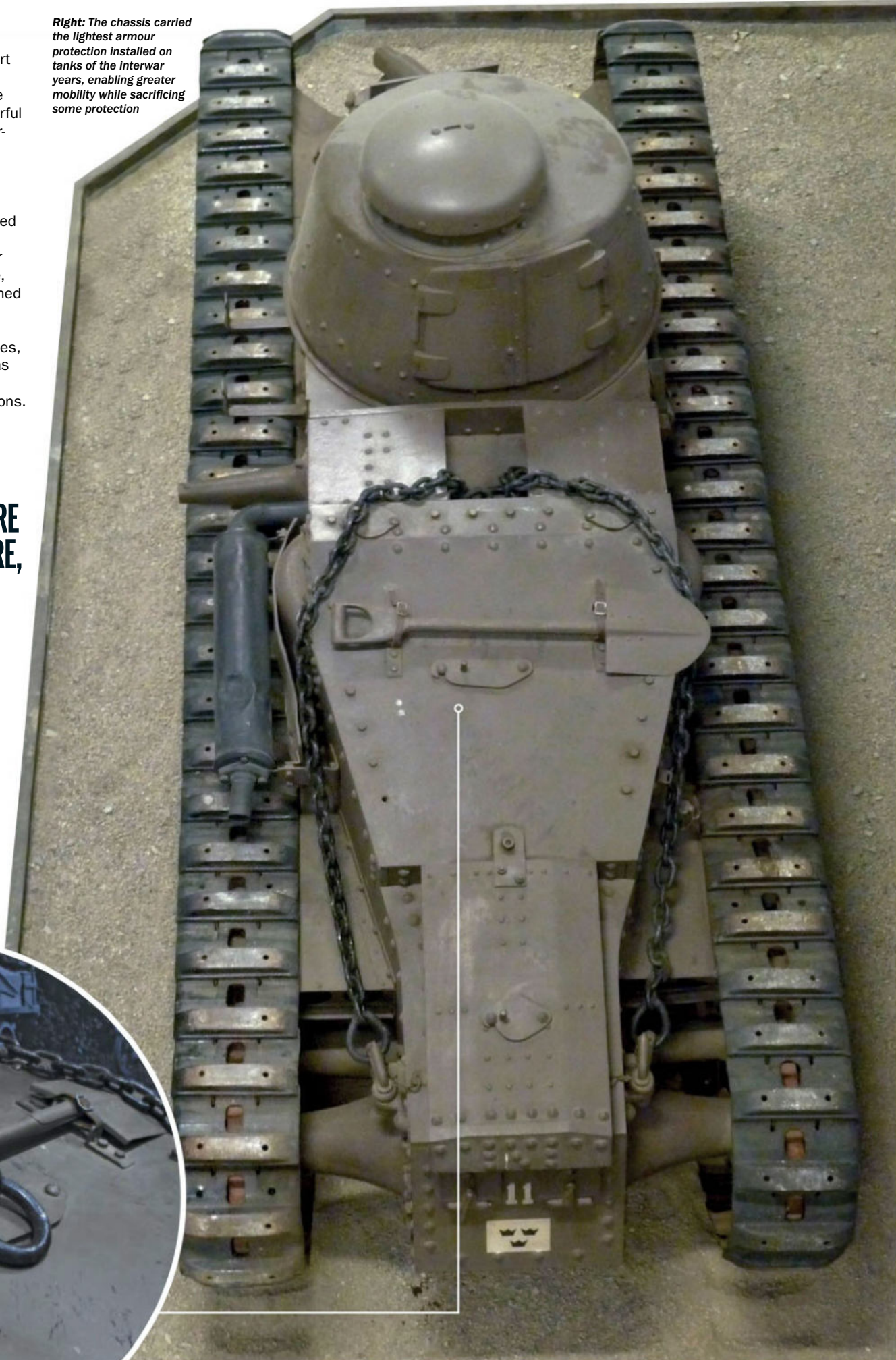
## ENGINES

As the Char D1 infantry support tank evolved from the original Renault NC project, the engine was upgraded to a more powerful 6.08-litre, 74-horsepower, four-cylinder gasoline powerplant capable of a top speed of 18.6 kilometres per hour. An enhanced cooling system and relocated exhaust pipe improved performance. Despite the fact that the earlier 65-horsepower engine had proven inadequate, the production Char D1 remained underpowered throughout its service life. Although its road range was roughly 90 kilometres, cross-country performance was dictated by the type of terrain traversed and weather conditions. In the field, the tank was also prone to mechanical failure.

**“THE ENGINE WAS UPGRADED TO A MORE POWERFUL 6.08-LITRE, 74-HORSEPOWER, FOUR-CYLINDER GASOLINE POWERPLANT CAPABLE OF A TOP SPEED OF 18.6 KILOMETRES PER HOUR”**

*Below: Each Renault Char D1 carried heavy chains for towing and tools to help extricate the tank from difficult terrain*

*Right: The chassis carried the lightest armour protection installed on tanks of the interwar years, enabling greater mobility while sacrificing some protection*





*The 47mm SA34 L30 main weapon provided firepower that was at least comparable to contemporary tanks that were either in development or production during the interwar years*

**“THE 47MM GUN WAS CAPABLE OF PENETRATING UP TO 25MM OF ARMOUR WITH EFFECTIVE RANGE UP TO 400 METERS”**

## ARMAMENT

The primary armament of the Char D1 was the 47mm SA34 L30 gun, capable of a rate of fire from 15 to 20 rounds per minute and mounted in the rotating turret. The 47mm gun was capable of penetrating up to 25mm of armour with effective range up to 400 meters. The weapon fired armour piercing and high explosive shells. Secondary armament consisted of two Reibel 7.5mm machine guns mounted coaxially in the turret and facing forward in the hull. These provided both offensive and defensive fire against enemy infantry, while the coaxial gun assisted in ranging and targeting the main weapon.

*The Char D1 carried a pair of Reibel 7.5mm machine guns which were effective against enemy infantry, while the coaxial machine gun might also have been used to assist in targeting the main weapon.*







The driver's position in the hull of the Renault Char D1 was somewhat more spacious than earlier tanks due to the relocation of the engine to the rear of the chassis. The tank was operated by a system of tillers along with a manual transmission

**“THE TANK COMMANDER WAS STATIONED IN THE TURRET AND SERVED AS THE 47MM GUNNER AND LOADER TOO, FIRING THE 7.5MM MACHINE GUN AS NECESSARY”**



Left: The rotating turret did not accommodate a hatch; therefore, the commander's field of vision was limited to that afforded from a small cupola

## INTERIOR

The relocation of the engine to the rear of the chassis, introduced in the earlier FT-17, provided more space for the crew compartment. The tank commander was stationed in the turret and served as the 47mm gunner and loader too, firing the 7.5mm machine gun as necessary. The driver was positioned forward and to the left in the hull, controlling the tank with a pair of tillers and a clutch to operate the manual transmission. The driver also fired the hull-mounted 7.5mm machine gun in combat. The radio operator was seated to the right in the hull and operated the ER 52 radio.

## ARSENALEN & WORLD OF TANKS

SWEDEN'S TANK MUSEUM IS HOME TO A VAST COLLECTION OF ARMoured VEHICLES

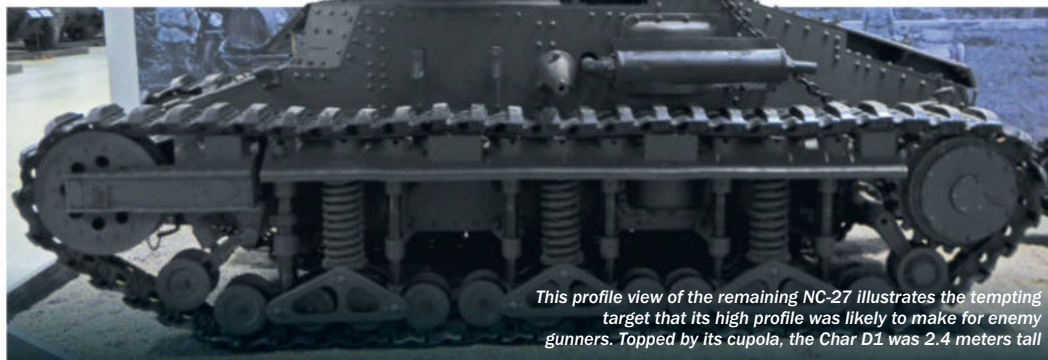
Located south-west of Stockholm near the sleepy town of Strängnäs, Arsenalen is host to a collection of over 350 tracked and wheeled military vehicles from all over the world and throughout the last century. The museum's NC-27 light tank – or Stridsvagn fm/28 – pictured here is the only one of its kind in the world, and just one of the many rare vehicles on display.

For those looking to get a more hands-on experience with these unique vehicles, the new Swedish Tech Tree from free online game World of Tanks offers players the chance to fight within 21 light, medium and heavy tanks, as well as destroyers.

For more information visit [arsenalen.se/en](http://arsenalen.se/en) and [worldoftanks.com](http://worldoftanks.com)

  
**WORLDofTANKS**  
**ROLL OUT**





This profile view of the remaining NC-27 illustrates the tempting target that its high profile was likely to make for enemy gunners. Topped by its cupola, the Char D1 was 2.4 meters tall

## DESIGN

The Renault Char D1 design is similar to that of the FT-17, with a sloping engine deck, high profile characteristic of early French tanks and rotating turret that became standard on armoured fighting vehicles. The ST2 turret was installed in a compromise measure – the

commander's field of vision was limited due to the absence of a hatch. Instead, he operated within a three-tiered turret and hull configuration capped by a cupola or observation dome. Armour plating up to 30mm thick offered reasonable protection but rapidly became inadequate. 12 road wheels with three bogies and a block spring suspension drove the caterpillar tracks.

## SERVICE HISTORY

OUTCLASSED VIRTUALLY FROM THE TIME OF ITS DEPLOYMENT, THE CHAR D1 TANK SAW SERVICE IN WWII DURING THE BATTLE OF FRANCE AND THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH AFRICA

Originally intended for deployment with the independent tank battalions of the French Army, the Char D1 was functionally obsolescent almost immediately. In the field, the tank was plagued with mechanical problems, and by the spring of 1934 a total of 110 had been delivered. However, 17 were completely inoperable while another 62 were undergoing repairs due to faulty brakes, overheating transmissions and plexiglass that cracked when the vehicle traversed rough terrain. The chassis was too pliant, as cross-country exercises revealed bent armour plating and snapped rivets. An extensive maintenance program failed to eliminate issues and the tank's shortcomings were obvious during deployment amid the Rhineland crisis of 1936.

Subsequently, the Char D1 was relegated to service with French colonial forces in North Africa. When the Germans invaded France and the Low Countries on 10 May 1940, all 135 operational Char D1 tanks were assigned to three independent

tank battalions in Tunisia. Quickly recalled to meet the Nazi invasion, these forces reached France in early June. The 67th Independent Tank Battalion supported the 6th Senegalese Mechanised Infantry Division in combat with the German 8th Panzer Division on 12 June, destroying several enemy tanks while losing seven of its own. The battalion lost all its armoured vehicles during the withdrawal that followed. When the fighting in France ended, 25 of the 43 Char D1 tanks engaged had been destroyed, while the Germans captured 18 others.

After the fall of France, the Vichy government retained the Char D1 in North Africa, and following Operation Torch these vehicles joined the Allied forces, participating in the Battle of Kasserine Pass and other engagements. The last Char D1 tanks were withdrawn from combat in the spring of 1943. One example of the NC27, export designation of the NC1 variant, survives in the Swedish Tank Museum in Strängnäs, and is the vehicle featured here.

**“THE CHASSIS WAS TOO PLIANT, AS CROSS-COUNTRY EXERCISES REVEALED BENT ARMOUR PLATING AND SNAPPED RIVETS”**

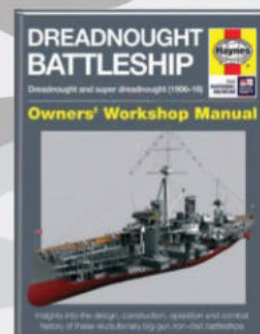
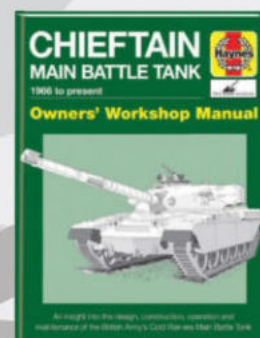
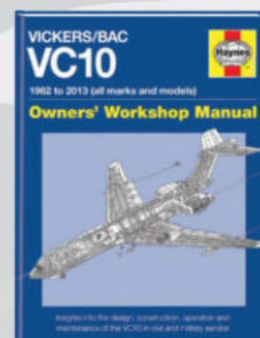
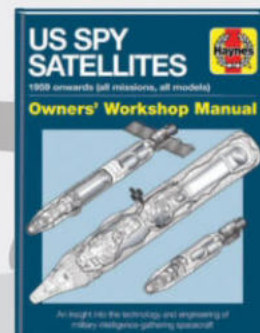


During initial field testing and deployment in the Rhineland Crisis of 1936, the riveted chassis of the Char D1 proved susceptible to fractures in rough terrain

Images: Getty



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**"TROUBLE HAD BEEN BREWING FOR SOME TIME.  
BRITISH AND FRENCH HIGH-HANDEDNESS IN THEIR  
DEALINGS WITH THE YOUNG UNITED STATES HAD  
INJURED AMERICAN PRIDE"**



*A coloured engraving of British  
forces storming the city of  
Washington, 24 August 1814*





# WASHINGTON BURNING

## HOW PLUNDERING, SABOTAGE & ATROCITIES SET THE WAR OF 1812 ALIGHT

WORDS DAVID SMITH

**T**he British force slogging its way towards Washington, the capital city of the still infant United States of America, was hot, tired and in an ugly mood after costly fighting in scorching temperatures.

Having scattered the disorganised American defenders at Bladensburg, the advanced units of the British column, which had borne the brunt of the fighting, sat down to recover. Casualties had been heavy, with perhaps as many as 180 men dying to secure the route to the capital and hundreds more had been wounded. The final push to Washington would be undertaken by fresh troops, who had played no part in the fighting.

Arriving in the capital in the fading light of 24 August 1814, the British, led by Major General Robert Ross and Rear Admiral George Cockburn, made their way to the White House

and found it deserted. The table being laid for a generous meal for 40, the British officers took advantage and enjoyed a fine dinner to cap off a hard but productive day's work.

But the pleasant diversion could not last for long. Ross and Cockburn had not come to the White House to dine out – they had come to burn it to the ground.

### On to Canada

After the end of the War of Independence, it would be more than a century before Britain and America forged their 'special relationship', and early interactions between the two nations were marked by suspicion and lingering enmity. This finally boiled over in the War of 1812, which stubbornly held onto its name despite almost all of the important events happening in later years.

Trouble had been brewing for some time. British and French high-handedness in their

dealings with the young United States had injured American pride. Prickly in their attitude to the British, who they had so recently ousted as their colonial masters, Americans were aware that they were still a minor country, liable to be pushed around by the major powers.

Grievances steadily built up, most notably caused by Britain's insistence that it had the right to stop and search neutral ships during its war with Napoleon, and impress any British sailors thus discovered. The 'Order in Council' of 1807 went further, insisting that all neutral vessels must first call in at a British port and pay duties before continuing to their destination, wherever that may be.

The United States also had territorial ambitions and had an eye on Canada, still controlled by the British. The war in Europe offered an opportunity – perhaps while the British had their hands full fighting Napoleon



## WASHINGTON BURNING

across the Atlantic, the US could take control of its northern neighbour.

Distrust between Britain and the US ran so deep that there were suspicions the British were trying to convince the New England states to secede from the Union, while Spanish territories in Texas and the Floridas offered the British (on good terms with Spain thanks to Wellington's army in the Iberian peninsula) an easy route into the US.

'War hawks' like Henry Clay were prominent in stirring up patriotic fervour and, despite having an army of just 4,000 men, war was declared on Britain in 1812. Ironically, it was declared at almost the exact moment that Britain repealed its unpopular 1807 Order in Council, one of the main causes of American unrest.

### The five theatres

Despite limited resources, the Americans opted for a bold plan, launching three campaigns against Canada in two theatres: the north-west

and the Niagara Frontier. Further fighting would take place on the Saint Lawrence and Lake Champlain Front, the Chesapeake Bay and in the south west, meaning that American forces were committed in no fewer than five theatres.

In their favour was the fact that Britain really could not spare much in the way of manpower or naval forces. The start of the war offered the Americans a chance to make rapid gains while Britain's attention was focused elsewhere.

It was in Canada that the fiercest fighting took place – and it was here that the seeds for the destruction of Washington were sown.

Henry Clay had famously remarked that the militia of Kentucky could do the job of

conquering Canada on its own. When it came time to actually invade, however, problems quickly presented themselves.

Quebec was the obvious target, and had been the goal of an American invasion in 1775, before the colonies had even declared their independence. It had proved too tough a nut to crack then and was considered too formidable in 1812, having the strongest British garrison.

A thrust on Montreal was planned instead, alongside a two-pronged invasion of the territory known as 'Upper Canada', one from Detroit and one across the Niagara Frontier.

Questionable planning and faulty leadership blighted all three of the American offensives

**“DESPITE THEIR LIMITED RESOURCES, THE AMERICANS OPTED FOR A BOLD PLAN, LAUNCHING THREE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST CANADA IN TWO THEATRES THE NORTH WEST AND THE NIAGARA FRONTIER”**



*The fourth President of the United States, James Madison. The War of 1812 was often referred to as 'Madison's War'*

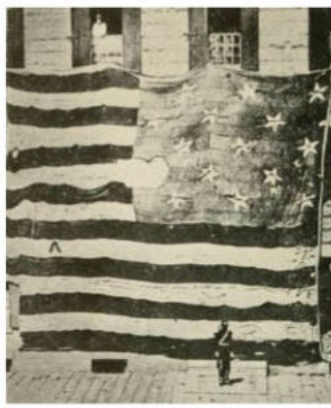


and in each case elements of the state militia refused to cross the border into Canada – a decided impediment for an invasion.

Brigadier General William Hull's offensive from Detroit was a disaster, leading to the loss of two forts and Detroit itself. William Henry Harrison took command and suffered a serious defeat when an 850-strong scouting party was routed by a combined British/Indian force. With the murder of surrendered men marking the end of the fighting, animosity between the two sides was already growing.

On the Niagara Frontier there was further trouble for the Americans, with 300 casualties (as well as close to 1,000 prisoners) taken during an attack on Queenston Heights, while the move on Montreal also miscarried.

It had been an inauspicious start to the war, but USS Constitution had won glory by battering HMS Guerriere in August, earning the nickname, 'Old Ironsides' in the process. Despite this signal success, American



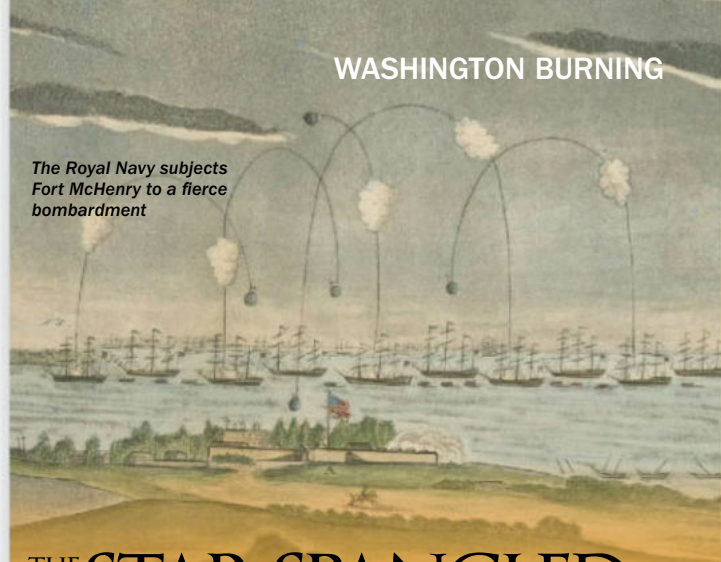
Above: The flag situated at Fort McHenry when a British attack was successfully repulsed in September 1814

Below: British soldiers look on as flames engulf the American capital



## WASHINGTON BURNING

The Royal Navy subjects Fort McHenry to a fierce bombardment



## THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

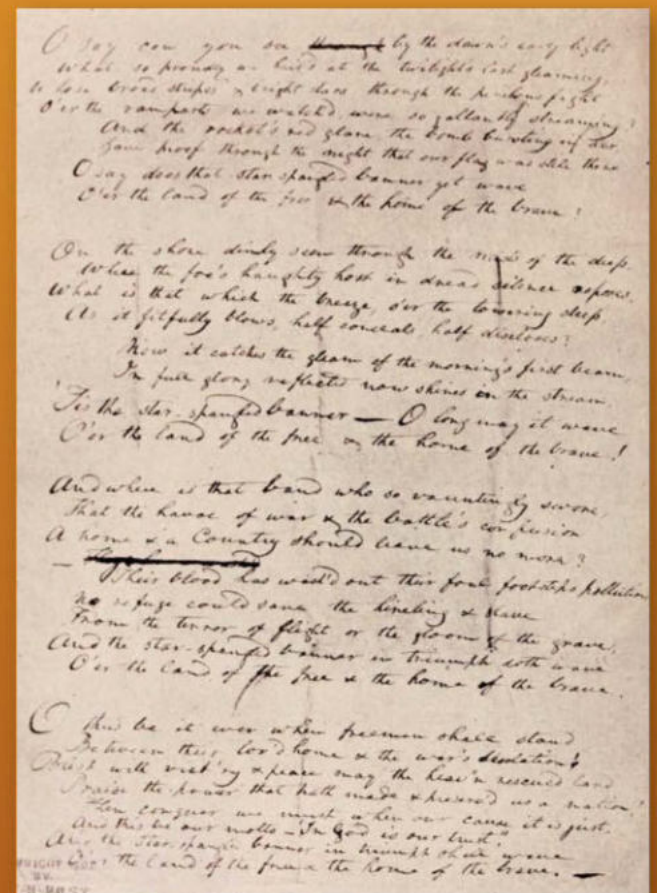
AMERICA'S NATIONAL ANTHEM HAD A DRAMATIC BIRTH

As well as helping to create an atmosphere of national unity, the War of 1812 also gave the United States its national anthem – although it took more than a century for it to be adopted as such.

The British assault on Baltimore, in which Major General Robert Ross lost his life, featured a heavy naval bombardment of Fort McHenry, which resisted all attempts to subdue it. On the morning of 14 September 1814, a Washington lawyer called Francis Scott Key saw the Stars and Stripes still defiantly flying above Fort McHenry and scribbled some song lyrics on the back of a letter he happened to have in his pocket.

British naval might had been resisted, and the Congreve rockets used in the bombardment had served only to provide the 'rockets' red glare' that had illuminated the flag throughout the night. The poetic lyrics (it was always intended to be a song, and Key suggested it should be sung to the tune of To Anacreon In Heaven), were renamed The Star-Spangled Banner, having originally been titled The Defence Of Fort M'Henry. Though notoriously difficult to sing, it was officially adopted as the nation's anthem in 1931.

Below: The original lyrics to 'The Star-Spangled Banner' (originally written without a title), with a couple of alterations visible





*The Shawnee Chief Tecumseh is shot and killed by Richard Johnson during the Battle of the Thames*



plans needed to be revised for the following campaign. The war was about to ignite.

## A capital burns

Having learned their lesson the previous year, just one American offensive was planned into Canada for 1813 – across the Niagara Frontier. A move towards Lake Ontario was intended to lay the foundations for a later assault on Montreal, but General Henry Dearborn, the commanding officer, had serious doubts.

Initially ordered to take Forts George and Erie, as well as attacking Kingston, Ontario, he felt more comfortable limiting himself to one objective and opted instead for York, the capital of Upper Canada. Despite being the capital, York was strategically unimportant and its capture would achieve little apart from an opportunity for a little positive propaganda.

Nevertheless, on 27 April, Dearborn launched his attack. Landing his forces from Lake Ontario, the offensive almost came unstuck immediately as the first wave was nearly overwhelmed. Managing to hang on until the second wave landed, the Americans were then able to put their numerical advantage (their 1,500-strong

## “BRITISH POLICY BECAME ONE OF HANGING ON TO CANADA WHILE MOUNTING LIMITED NAVAL RAIDS ON THE EAST COAST OF AMERICA”

force outnumbered the British and their Native American allies by 2:1) to good use.

Once the American landing was secure, in fact, the British regulars recognised the hopelessness of their situation and withdrew from York entirely, leaving Canadian militia to continue the defence. Their principal action was the detonation of a large powder magazine, which sent a vast amount of earth and boulders into the air. One of the boulders landed on the American officer commanding the landing, the extravagantly named Zebulon Pike, who was mortally wounded.

Prior to the attack, Pike had warned his men against mistreating the civilian population of the town. The Canadians, according to Pike, were unwilling participants in the war, having been forced to take part by the British. Whether or not Pike's death influenced American actions, looting of

civilian properties soon started and Parliament buildings were put to the torch. Unwilling to stop his troops actions and perhaps supporting their actions, Dearborn ordered the destruction of the remaining military structures and the Government House the next day.

Dearborn would draw criticism for letting the British regulars escape to fight another day, but there was no word of censure for the destruction of York. It would recover, of course, and eventually became better known as Toronto.

## Britain's response

As far as the British were concerned, the early years of the war were very much a case of making do with what was at hand. Canada, under the overall command of Sir George Prevost, could not look for any serious reinforcements while the Napoleonic War raged in Europe.

British policy became one of hanging on to Canada while mounting limited naval raids on the East Coast of America, more to divert attention from Canada than anything else. The disorganised nature of American operations helped, but the fighting in Canada and along the border became increasingly bitter.



*Left: George Cockburn would go on to become Admiral of the Fleet*



# FROM SLAVES TO SOLDIERS

IT MAY HAVE BEEN AN INCONCLUSIVE AFFAIR, BUT THE WAR OF 1812 FREED MANY SLAVES FROM THEIR LIVES OF SERVITUDE

Britain's diversionary raids on the American east coast, designed to take the pressure off the defensive forces in Canada, provided an opportunity for slaves in the area to escape and build new lives.

The view of slaves at the time was that they were docile and happy enough in their state of captivity. While it is true that the Maryland and Virginia slaves were on the whole better treated than their southern counterparts, the idea that they were happy being slaves was obviously mistaken and this was placed beyond doubt when British forces started to arrive in the region in early 1813.

Although incitement of the slave population was firmly prohibited by orders from home, the British commanders, Admiral John Borlase Warren and Colonel Sir Thomas Sydney Beckwith, did have permission to offer protection to slaves who were willing to help, whether by offering labour or giving information on the local territory. This protection extended to taking the slaves, as free men, to British territories (known as 'emigration'), or allowing the slaves to join the British army or navy.

American slave owners soon began to fear that almost all of their 'property' would take advantage of this generous offer whenever a British ship appeared. Some of the slaves were taken to the West Indies or Nova Scotia, while many served as labourers or scouts.

As well as the valuable work done by the freed slaves, the white population of America had a dread of their former property turning against them, making the defection of slaves a major propaganda tool.

By 1814, under the command of Admiral Cochrane, British policy had expanded to actively encourage emigration. They were, in Cochrane's own words, "more terrific to the Americans than any troops that can be brought forward."

As well as large numbers leaving their former masters, around 200 slaves enlisted in a 'Corps of Colonial Marines', which saw service at Bladensburg on the approach to Washington and drew praise for the steadiness and bravery of its troops. The unit also performed well as skirmishers in the ill-fated approach to Baltimore.

*Right: Gabriel Hall, who migrated from the United States to Nova Scotia during the War of 1812*



*British troops retain remarkable discipline in this sanitized depiction of the burning of Washington.*

The Americans abandoned Fort George and set fire to the village of Newark. Later, the British forces attacked and burned Buffalo (following the Battle of Buffalo or Battle of Black Rock). In turn, United States forces destroyed Port Dover.

American fortunes appeared to have turned with a naval victory on Lake Erie, followed by success at the Battle of the Thames on 5 October 1813, in which the charismatic Native American leader Tecumseh, who had dreamed of building an Indian confederacy, was killed.

A costly British assault on Fort Erie continued the seesaw nature of the conflict; the assault was repulsed, but the Americans then destroyed the fort and withdrew from Canada. Their dream of an easy conquest had come to nothing.

In contrast to the inconclusive fighting in Canada, however, a very decisive battle was fought that year in Europe, at Leipzig, from 16–19 October. Napoleon was defeated and was soon to be exiled. Britain could finally devote some serious attention to its little war across the Atlantic.

By the summer of 1814, 10,000 British regulars, many of them veterans of Wellington's Peninsula campaign, were heading for America. Meanwhile, the British naval blockade, with the benefit of extra ships now they were not needed to blockade French ports, was starting to bite. Extended across the entire eastern seaboard, it

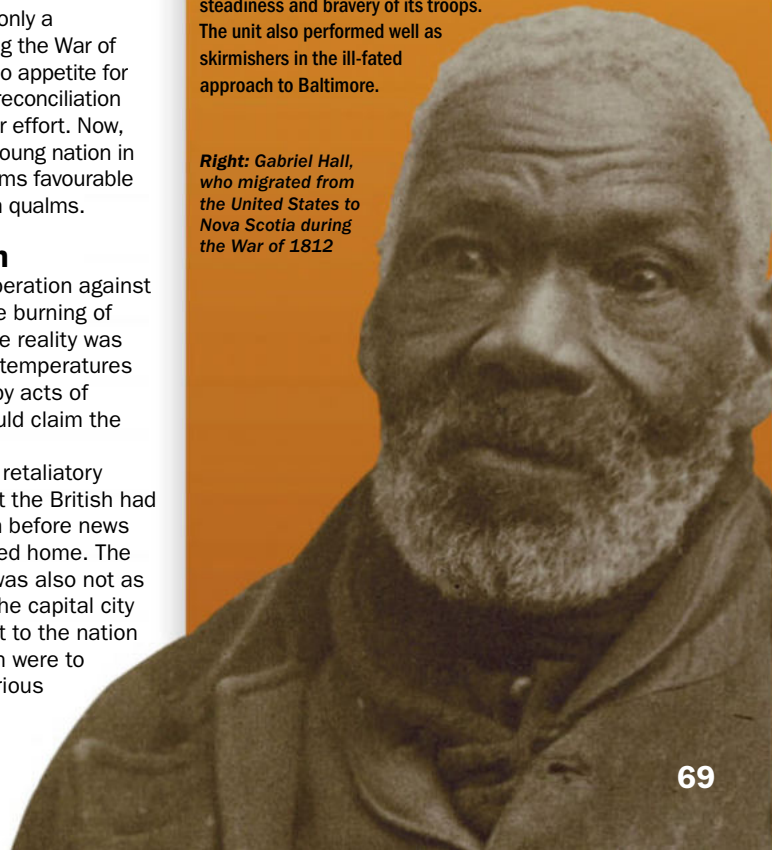
suffocated American commerce; exports were at just ten per cent of their pre-war levels in 1814. Raids had also proved effective – 25 American ships had been destroyed in an operation on the Connecticut River.

It was the sort of warfare that only a select few had championed during the War of Independence. There had been no appetite for punitive coastal raids then, with reconciliation the primary goal of the British war effort. Now, with the intention of putting the young nation in its place and enforcing peace terms favourable to the British, there were no such qualms.

## The raid on Washington

Although it is easy to see the operation against Washington as retaliation for the burning of York, Newark and Dover Port, the reality was not quite so clear-cut. Certainly temperatures on both sides had been raised by acts of destruction, but neither side could claim the moral high ground.

Prevost in Canada did ask for retaliatory raids against the Americans, but the British had been raiding coastal towns even before news of the destruction of York reached home. The decision to attack Washington was also not as obvious as might seem today. The capital city of America was not as important to the nation as, for instance, Paris or London were to their respective nations. The various







**"AMERICAN RESISTANCE MAY HAVE BEEN  
DISORGANISED, BUT IT FINALLY TOOK SOLID FORM ON  
THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BRIDGE AT BLADENSBURG"**



*It was during the Battle of North Point that Robert Ross was fatally wounded*

## **“THE BRITISH ASSAULT INCLUDED THE USE OF CONGREVE ROCKETS, WHICH ADDED A BANSHEE-LIKE MAYHEM TO THE BATTLEFIELD”**

states were still very loosely bound and, as the British had discovered when occupation of the capital in 1777 (Philadelphia) had brought no strategic advantage, there was little tangible benefit in taking the capital in 1814. Britain, of course, did not intend to actually occupy the capital this time.

It may have been a Royal Navy captain, Joseph Nourse, who planted the idea for the raid on Washington – not because it would be payback for York, but simply because it would be so easy to accomplish. The Americans were in no fit state to offer serious resistance.

The local commander, General William Winder, was a political appointment lacking any real military nous. As the nephew of Maryland governor Levin Winder, it was expected that he would be able to mobilise state militia in order to offer resistance to any British landing. In the event, only 250 Maryland militia had been forthcoming when the critical moment came.

Making matters worse for Winder, there was doubt about where the British would strike. British Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Forester Inglis Cochrane had deployed ships to several areas to disguise intentions. When General Ross's brigade of 4,000 men landed on 19 August, there was nobody to meet them and over the next two days, they marched unopposed, covering 32 kilometres despite the fierce summer heat.

The American response was so lackadaisical that the British were able to get through two potential crisis points uninterrupted. First, Ross and Cockburn could not decide which route to take to Washington and halted their march for the best part of two days to ponder the matter.

Having finally decided to loop around and attack from the north east, they started marching again on 23 August, only to receive a

recall order from Admiral Cochrane. Ross and Cockburn, as joint army and navy commanders, now debated on whether or not Cochrane's order could or should be ignored. The following morning, they came to the conclusion that they were so far committed to the attack that it could no longer be called off, and they set off once more. Bladensburg, where a bridge offered a convenient crossing of the Potomac, was their interim destination.

### **The Battle of Bladensburg**

American resistance may have been disorganised, but it finally took solid form on the opposite side of the bridge at Bladensburg. General Winder had been in position at the Washington Navy Yard, fearing a strike there, when firm news came of the British movements. He arrived at Bladensburg in time to witness a fierce struggle.

The British assault included the use of Congreve rockets, which added a banshee-like mayhem to the battlefield, and the first two American lines were soon broken. A third, boosted by a strong artillery component, promised to stand firm until Winder ordered it to retreat as well. The British had paid a price, but the road to Washington was clear.

The Capitol Building was the first to burn, before Ross and his fellow officers took advantage of President Madison's hospitality in the dining room of the White House. Actually called either the 'President's House' or the 'Executive Mansion' at the time, the building was impressive but incomplete when it received its uninvited visitors. It was, however, already painted white, as several historical references confirm. The story that it was painted white to cover the scorch marks of the 1814 burning is, sadly, a myth.

*Built to take on and overpower enemy frigates, USS Constitution was designed by Joshua Humphreys*





## WASHINGTON BURNING

*A severely outnumbered American force, commanded by future president Andrew Jackson, defeats the British at New Orleans*



As well as furniture and clothing, Madison's library was destroyed in the fire, set by Cockburn's sailors rather than Ross's soldiers, and the damage was estimated at around \$12,000. Famously, a portrait of George Washington had been removed from the house at the last moment, supposedly by the fleeing staff, and preserved.

The Treasury Building was next, but the British did not consider private property a target, although one dwelling was burned after shots were fired from its windows, one of which downed Ross's horse.

However, the fires in Washington were dwarfed by the one at the Navy Yard, set by the Americans themselves so that it would not fall into British hands. The following day, an increasingly exhausted British force set fire to the buildings of the State and War Departments, and the printing presses of the National Intelligencer were wrecked.

As if to put a stop to the unsavoury activities, a severe thunderstorm then erupted, which has been interpreted as both the wrath of God at British brutality and also a final punishment on the town itself – it destroyed many private dwellings and the British beat a hasty retreat. The raid on Washington was over.

### The aftermath

There were many ways of looking at the burning of Washington. It was a demonstration of British power – especially in relation to its fleet, which could land men anywhere it chose – and a warning to the Americans to respect their former masters. It

was perhaps a fitting retaliation for similar acts by American forces during the war, although exactly where such tit-for-tat actions began or ended could be debated endlessly.

It was, as the naval captain Joseph Nourse had suggested, something that just seemed too easy to ignore, and the civilian population was not targeted in any case. Still, there were many who saw it as an act of barbarism and there were shocked reactions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Unsurprisingly, the president himself objected strongly, but in London there were cutting remarks in the press to the effect that even the Cossacks had been more merciful to Paris.

Most incredible, however, was the ease with which it had been accomplished. After more than two years of war, the summer weather was the strongest opponent the British had to contend with in a march to their enemy's capital. America had once dreamed of adding Canada to its territory, but it had eventually proved unable to protect its own seat of government.

Flushed with their success, the British attempted another raid, this time on Baltimore, which promised far greater spoils

if they could repeat their feats at Washington. Ross once more led his men into battle, but paid the ultimate price when he was killed by American sharpshooters on the approach to the city. The Royal Navy was then stymied in its assault on Fort M'Henry, guarding Baltimore's fine harbour, and the attack was called off.

The War of 1812 has been called a 'silly little war', full of bad decisions and blundering leadership, but it provided a wake-up call for the United States and helped set it on a course for greater unity and enormous expansion. The lack of complete harmony between the states would erupt in far more bloody fashion a couple of generations later, but as the war wound down, it had served to bring the states a little closer together.

Fittingly, for a war that had started despite the British repealing the very act that had, in large part, provoked it, the greatest American victory of the war came after it had ended. Peace had already been agreed before Andrew Jackson won his famous victory at New Orleans on 8 January 1815.

Both sides were able to put their worst experiences of the War of 1812 behind them rapidly. The Americans may have greeted the Treaty of Ghent with a sigh of relief rather than a shout of triumph, as the historian George Dangerfield noted, but soon they were remembering their victories at New Orleans, on Lake Erie and on the high seas where the USS Constitution had immortalised herself.

The British, meanwhile, soon had a major victory to savour after putting the cork back into Napoleon's bottle at Waterloo. The events of the 'silly little war', even the burning of Washington itself, paled into insignificance in comparison.

*Right: The burnt-out shell of the White House stands alone in the surrounding landscape shortly after the fire*



Images: Alamy



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## Heroes of the Medal of Honor

# DR MARY EDWARDS WALKER

One of the first women in the US to earn a medical degree, Doctor Walker put herself in harm's way to contribute her skills to the Union war effort

WORDS DAVID A NORRIS

**K**eeping a watchful eye out for the enemy, Confederate pickets caught an unusual prisoner just south of the Tennessee-Georgia border on 10 April 1864. The prisoner was a young woman, dressed in a strange feminised version of a Union Army officer's uniform. She surprised the pickets, and their superior officers, by announcing that they had just captured Mary E Walker, MD, the assistant surgeon of the 52nd Ohio Infantry.

Unique among the Union Army's surgeons, Walker was an 1855 graduate of the Syracuse Medical College, and one of the first women in the US to earn a medical degree. She shared a practice with her husband, who was also a physician, until his infidelities led to their divorce.

In 1861, Doctor Walker gave up private practice to seek a commission in the Union Army as a military surgeon. She was refused such an appointment, and in turn, she rejected employment as a volunteer nurse.

An opportunity arose in late 1861. Surgeon JN Green was overwhelmed after the death of his assistant surgeon at the Indiana Hospital, a temporary army medical facility squeezed into the US Patent Office building in Washington, DC. Green accepted the unconventional Doctor Walker on his staff, but he was unable to obtain a commission or any pay for his new colleague. When Green offered to share his pay, Doctor Walker refused because she knew Green needed the money to support his own family.

Later as a volunteer, Doctor Walker assisted medical officers to treat wounded soldiers at field hospitals in Virginia, including during the aftermath of the Battle of Fredericksburg on 11-15 December 1862. However, tracing her exact movements in this period is difficult because military records include little notice of volunteer medical workers.

In September 1863, Doctor Walker obtained official status, partly through the consent of Major General George H Thomas. She was hired as a contract acting assistant surgeon and attached to the Army of the Cumberland in Tennessee. Contract surgeons were temporarily hired by the army. They received officer's pay, but instead of receiving commissions, they remained civilians.

For a time, Walker was attached to the 52nd Ohio Infantry. Evidently, she was a replacement for the regiment's assistant surgeon, who died from an overdose of morphine.

While on duty, she wore a uniform of her own design. Over a pair of trousers, she wore a calf-length dress that resembled an officer's frock coat with military-style buttons. The doctor regarded her clothing as practical and efficient. Although this was a very modest outfit by today's standards, her choice of costume shocked and angered most of her 1860s contemporaries.

Reflecting her status with the regiment, Doctor Walker also wore the green sash that designated army surgeons, and a felt hat with military insignia and a plume. Her only official status was through her contract, but she considered herself to be an assistant surgeon on duty with the 52nd Ohio, and she typically signed her name as "Mary E Walker, MD," sometimes adding the rank of major.

The health of the 52nd Ohio's rank and file was good, and the medical officers had little to do. Few soldiers knew what to make of such an unusual doctor, and many of them disliked her because of her precedent-breaking role as an army doctor. Some soldiers in the regiment suspected she was a spy, and others believed she was the colonel's mistress. Long after the war, Nixon B Stewart, a sergeant in the 52nd, wrote a regimental history. Stewart wrote that during the war, "The men seemed to hate her,

and she did little or nothing for the sick of the regiment." He was more reflective when looking back from the vantage point of the year 1900: "We believe she was honest and sincere in her views, posing as a reformer, yet the majority of the men in the regiment believed she was out of her place in the army."

A conspicuous sight in her uniform, Doctor Walker frequently rode out of camp. It appeared that she was visiting poor families on both sides of the lines. She claimed that her visits to needy families of absent Confederate soldiers helped to win over local residents to support the Union. But there is indication that she took these rides to gather intelligence on the enemy. It's possible that, in part, the army brass appointed her as an assistant surgeon so she could use her unique status as a cover for spying.

On 10 April 1864, Doctor Walker was stopped by Confederate pickets near Tunnel Hill, Georgia. Her captors were surprised at her unconventional attire. The Macon Daily Confederate reported that: "She was riding a man's saddle, with one foot in each stirrup! Oh, my! Goodness gracious!"

She tried to talk her way out of the situation, explaining to the sceptical soldiers that she wanted to mail some letters into the Confederacy for friends within the Union lines. Placed under arrest as a suspected spy, she was escorted to Virginia by a staff offer. Upon her arrival in Richmond on 21 April, the 'female Yankee surgeon' was sent to Castle Thunder, a military prison that held civilian prisoners.

The capture of this 'Yankee doctress' was widely covered in Union and Confederate newspapers and she was willing to joust with her critics in the public prints. On the day she arrived in Richmond, she wrote to the *Richmond Dispatch*: "Will you please correct the statement you made in this morning's *Dispatch*, in regard



**“DOCTOR MARY E WALKER WAS THE FIRST, AND REMAINS THE ONLY, WOMAN AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO MILITARY MEDICINE AND SELFLESS ACTIONS DURING THE CIVIL WAR”**

Senate Resolution 441, Recognizing the History and Continued Accomplishments of Women in the Armed Forces of the United States, March 4, 2010

*In 1866, Doctor Mary Walker became the first and only woman to hold the Medal of Honor. Here she is pictured wearing the medal with a version of the uniform she wore on military duty*



*Left: Often criticised or arrested for her appearance, Mary is quoted to have said, “I don’t wear men’s clothes, I wear my own clothes”*





*The Battle of Fredericksburg carried a large butcher's bill with close to 20,000 men killed or wounded*

**"IN THE OPINION OF THE PRESIDENT, AN  
HONOURABLE RECOGNITION OF HER SERVICES  
AND SUFFERINGS SHOULD BE MADE"**

*President Andrew Johnson, Medal of Honor citation*



*Refused a surgeon's commission for two years because of her gender, Doctor Mary Walker served as a volunteer at Virginia field hospitals*





to my being 'dressed in male attire.' I am attired in what is usually called the 'bloomer' or 'reform dress', which is similar to other ladies, with the exception of its being shorter and more physiological than long dresses."

Apparently it took some time for the Confederate authorities to decide how to handle the case. *The Richmond Dispatch* reported on 13 August, "When Miss Doctor Walker emerged from the confines of the castle, she gave vent to an audible huzzah, and raising her hat from her head made an obeisance to the officers of the prison." After four months in prison, Doctor Walker was exchanged for a captive Confederate Army surgeon. For the rest of her life, she proudly regarded herself as the first female POW to be exchanged for a military officer.

After her exchange, she was appointed medical director of the hospital for female inmates of the Louisville Military Prison in Kentucky. Then, she was transferred to an orphanage in Nashville, Tennessee until her Federal contract expired on 15 June 1865.

After the war ended, Doctor Walker continued to seek a permanent spot as a military surgeon. Severe post-war cutbacks limited the need for army doctors, and the Medical Department was unwilling to find her a new post. As a civilian, she was ineligible for an honorary brevet officer promotion but there remained the possibility of a Medal of Honor to reward Doctor Walker for her wartime services and hardships.

By 1865, ambiguous standards had led to some unusual presentations of the Medal of Honor. Many soldiers received the medal after capturing an enemy flag, but several awards were made to lucky soldiers who simply picked up lost flags they found after a battle. 29 soldiers who served as President Lincoln's funeral guard received the medal. Medals were offered to every soldier in the 27th Maine as an inducement to re-enlist and because of a clerical error, all 864 men of the regiment received the Medal of Honor, whether or not they re-enlisted.

Doctor Walker's medal citation, given by President Andrew Johnson on 11 November 1865, explained in part, "By reason of her not being a commissioned officer in the military service, a brevet or honorary rank cannot, under existing laws, be conferred upon her. Whereas in the opinion of the president, an honourable recognition of her services and sufferings should be made. It is ordered, that a testimonial thereof shall be hereby made and given

to the said Doctor Mary E Walker, and that the usual Medal of Honor for meritorious services be given her."

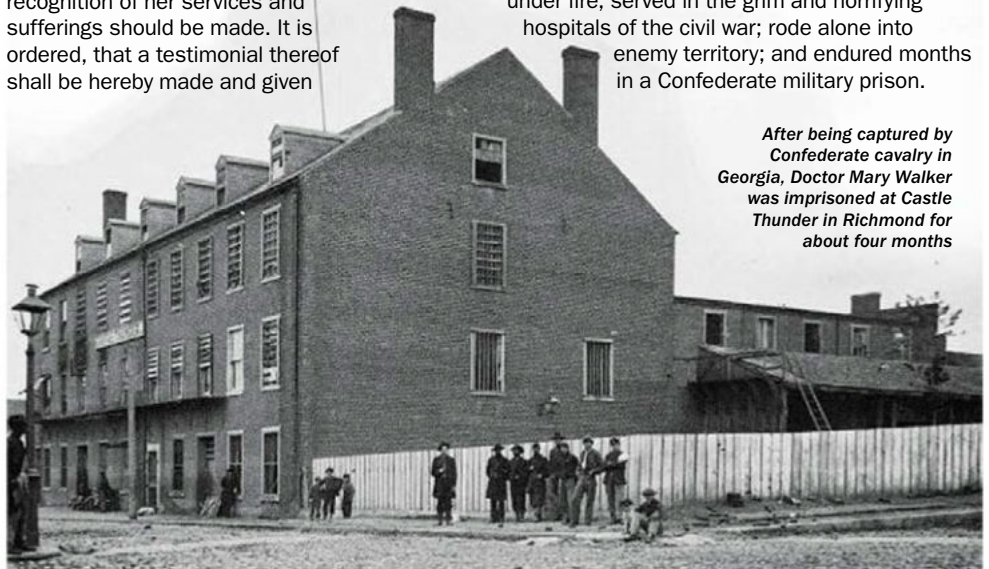
Doctor Walker continued to write and lecture on women's rights and campaigned against alcohol and tobacco. For more than 50 years, she attracted much attention in the press for her insistence on dress reform. Late in life, she often dressed in men's attire, including a Prince Albert coat and a top hat.

Poor health plagued Doctor Walker after the war. Due to vision problems attributed to her four months as a prisoner of war, she was granted an invalid pension in 1873. She was one of very few women who received US military pensions for active service, rather than as widows or dependents, before the 20th century.

Congress revised the standards for the Medal of Honor in 1916. The army was ordered to revoke any medals found to have been awarded, "...for any cause other than distinguished conduct in action involving actual conflict with an enemy." 2,625 cases were reviewed, and 911 medals that did not meet the new standards were rescinded in 1917. Among the disavowed medals were those of the 27th Maine, the Lincoln funeral guard, and Doctor Mary Walker. In her case, the War Department found nothing, "...in the records to show the specific act or acts for which the decoration was originally awarded." She refused to return the medal, and continued to wear it until she died in 1919 at the age of 86.

In 1977, Army Secretary Clifford L. Alexander, Jr, following the recommendation of the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records, restored Doctor Mary Walker's Medal of Honor. UPI reported that the review board stated that the officers who rescinded the medal in 1917, "...may have erred, although there was no one particular act of heroism". The 1977 review found, "...ample evidence to show distinguished gallantry at the risk of life in the face of the enemy."

Doctor Walker's Medal of Honor remains unique. Under modern regulations, she would not qualify for the medal. By 1860s standards, perhaps the medal was a fitting tribute to her service. Mary Edwards Walker could easily have remained at home, but she insisted on putting herself in harm's way in order to contribute to the Union war effort and promote her belief in women's rights. As a result, she placed herself under fire; served in the grim and horrifying hospitals of the civil war; rode alone into enemy territory; and endured months in a Confederate military prison.



After being captured by Confederate cavalry in Georgia, Doctor Mary Walker was imprisoned at Castle Thunder in Richmond for about four months



## BRIEFING

*During the 1990s, small teams of Hezbollah fighters made it their business to constantly harass the IDF in Southern Lebanon*







## BRIEFING

# Hezbollah

Funded by Iran and armed to the teeth, the military wing of Lebanon's ruling party is among the most formidable terrorist groups in the world

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

**U**nique among the Arab states of the Middle East, Lebanon always possessed an allure that set it apart from its neighbours. Its snow-capped mountains and wave-swept shores are forever enchanting.

Running the country's length is the grandeur of the Beqaa Valley, which terminates at the Syrian frontier. However, Lebanon's politics, like its history, is sown with discord and strange contrasts. The state thrives as a regional hub for trade and finance, even when it's flooded with refugees. Half a century ago, these were Palestinians dispossessed by Israel's bloody birth and before them came the Armenians escaping genocide in the Ottoman Empire. Today, more than 1 million Syrians comprise a fifth of the national population, having fled more recent conflicts in the region.

The sum of these ills prove how, almost 30 years since its vicious civil war ended, the country as a whole has yet to make a complete recovery. These weaknesses have served an institution that is transforming the Levant little by little: the Party of God – Hezbollah.

Known for their trademark yellow flag on which printed Arabic script clutches a rifle, Hezbollah's soft-spoken leader, Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, carries himself with the gravitas of a religious scholar. His composure hardly betrays the violence his organisation is capable of. The fighters under his command, which included his own son, are committed to defeating Israel and exult in unwavering faith, martyrdom and their destiny. Beyond militant activities, Hezbollah conduct themselves as protectors of Lebanon's impoverished Shiites, who endured for centuries without political representation.

For a group dedicated to thwarting their avowed nemesis, Hezbollah have become versatile actors in the ongoing wars raging across the Middle East. They're overstretched in Syria and Iraq. Veteran Hezbollah cadres,

experts at guerrilla warfare, are fighting the Salafi-Wahhabi extremism embodied by IS and its Takfiri brethren, the garden-variety Al-Qaeda offshoots in the Syrian opposition. It's a bizarre death match between the world's most dangerous terrorist armies.

The entire movement and its elaborate leadership exists as a ward of Iran, who endows it each year with enough cash to cover salaries, pensions, social services and a myriad of enterprises from bakeries to trade unions.

Hezbollah have come a very long way from their revolutionary past. Examining the group's origins reveals important lessons on how power emerges from the ruins of failed states.

## The rubble of Beirut

The seeds of an independent Lebanese state date back to beleaguered Maronite Christians who, facing ethnic cleansing during a 19th-century civil war in Syria, beseeched France to intervene on their behalf. The conflict then pitted the Maronites against the Druze – a 1,000-year-old sect whose religious practice is borrowed from various eastern belief systems. The Druze received support from Ottoman forces in the province, their co-religionists no matter how distantly related.

The French obliged and began a long alliance that has lasted until today. Lebanon's politicians still turn to Paris for favours, aid and arms deals. However, the intervention of 1860 was short-lived. After British objected to the prolonged French involvement in the province, the land named for Jubal Lebnan (Mount Lebanon), whose foothills provided a Maronite enclave, was returned to Ottoman control.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement that redrew the Middle East in the middle of the Great War brought Lebanon back under French influence. This formed part of a greater prize ceded to Paris. While Britain had Palestine and Iraq, the lands of the Alawites, Turkmen, Kurds and

## THE PEARL OF THE MIDDLE EAST

1860

A civil war between the Maronite Christians and the Druze compels France to intervene and impose a tenuous peace. 6,000 French soldiers arrive and remain for less than a year.

1916

The signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement on 16 April divides the Arab Middle East into spheres of influence. The territory of Lebanon and Syria are ceded to the French Mandate on 25 April 1920.

1943

The Lebanese Republic gains full independence when the French Mandate expires on 22 November. The Christian-majority state is the only one of its kind in the Middle East.



a multitude of Christian sects, along with the fabled city of Damascus, now belonged to a French Mandate.

These ephemeral statelets had little in the way of longevity and were battered during WWII as the Allies wrested the Syrian Federation from the Vichy French. The Lebanese Republic, established as early as 1926, survived unscathed and a bloodless transition to full independence took place in November 1943.

The first blow to Lebanon's cohesion was the Europeanised Maronite Christian majority's control of the presidency, the judiciary and the armed forces. This limited the representation of the country's Muslims, both Sunni and Shiite, as well as the Druze and a half dozen other minorities.

Of course, worst of all for Lebanon was the emergence of Israel as an independent state in 1948. Not only did Lebanon join – and lose – the ensuing Arab-Israeli war, but the displacement of many Palestinians soon added another unstable ingredient into multi-ethnic Lebanese society.

A short civil war erupted in 1958, as the Maronite Christians faced off with the Sunni Muslims over political differences. At the time, the speedy arrival of thousands of US Marines diffused the crisis. Almost 20 years of uninterrupted peace followed but when the militant Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were evicted from neighbouring Jordan, their presence exacerbated sectarian tensions.

One of Lebanon's largest political parties, the right-wing Phalangists, considered the PLO a menace. So did Israel, whose northern settlements and towns were now vulnerable to terrorist incursions. When fighting erupted between the Lebanese government and the PLO in 1975, a new civil war began, with the active involvement of Syria. Hafez al-Assad, father of the current Bashar al-Assad, believed the Syrian army was the best instrument for reclaiming Lebanon as an appendage to Damascus. A secondary objective was to turn the Beqaa Valley into a training ground for Syrian proxies. The effort soon grew into a network of terrorist camps, which included the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who laid the groundwork for Hezbollah's inception.

In 1978, an increasingly impatient Israel launched a short-lived incursion into Southern Lebanon. It was in 1982, under the direction of defence minister Ariel Sharon, when Israel Defence Force tanks entered Lebanon once more, cheered on by Shiite Muslims as they traced a path to Beirut. They had come to crush the PLO and the Syrians for good – even if it meant wrecking Lebanon.

## A new age of terror

The slow-motion agony of Lebanon rallied the international community in yet another effort to

save what one US TV network called “the pearl of the Middle East.”

By the summer of 1983, not only was a US Navy flotilla, including the battleship USS New Jersey, positioned off Beirut, but thousands of troops had divided the city among themselves. This visiting army, the Multinational Force (MNF), included tough-as-nails American Marines, French and Italian soldiers and a token 100-man British contingent braving constant gunfire in their near-obsolete Ferret armoured cars. The overriding goal was to restore calm and lay the groundwork for peace.

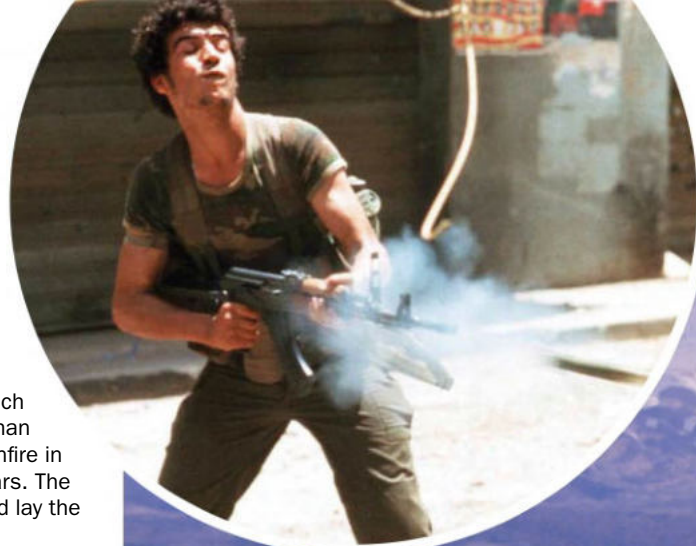
In retrospect, the entire mission was an ill-conceived gesture. The Israelis were firmly entrenched in Beirut's outskirts; their Phalangist allies among the Maronite Christians still roved the streets to feud with their Sunni Muslim and Druze adversaries; and the PLO and the Syrians clung to their own cantons in the once vibrant city. Amid this chaos, US and Western European forces tried to moderate Israel's constant efforts to evict the PLO, whose 11,000 fighters refused to lay down arms.

While the PLO did relent and agree to withdraw – their fighters boarded ships for the Tunisian capital – this didn't alter the savage tempo of the ongoing Lebanese civil war. The massacres, perpetrated by Phalangists in the slums of Sabra and Chatila against Palestinian civilians, undermined Israel's role in Lebanon and embarrassed the MNF, who did nothing to stop the bloodshed.

Within two years, both forces – the occupying Israelis and the MNF – abandoned Lebanon with utmost haste. For the Reagan administration in particular, the Lebanese mission had turned into a fiasco. The April 1983 bombing of the US embassy in Beirut killed 63 men and women, and within months an attack on a Marine barracks left 241 dead. This not only undermined American power and prestige but showed how Iran could exert its own influence in the field.

To this day, the role Hezbollah played in either incident is unclear. After all, it wasn't until the IDF withdrew to Southern Lebanon, where they established a network of bases and outposts with their local proxies the South Lebanon Army (SLA), that Hezbollah and its armed wing, the Islamic Resistance, first advertised its existence. This wasn't immediately significant, since it meant Hezbollah were now in competition with another Shiite party/militia called Amal Movement as the ‘genuine’ protector of the community.

Right from the beginning, Hezbollah distinguished itself with its message and conduct. It was a radical group with the organisation of a political party. A council of department heads elected its secretary general



Above: A Shiite militiaman fires his weapon during bitter fighting in Beirut during the civil war, c.1985



Hezbollah fighters are renowned for their discipline, tactics and lethal weaponry – including AT-3 Sagger anti-tank missiles

### 1958

Exactly ten years after Israel gained its independence, Lebanon collapses into a brief civil war. The quick intervention of a multinational peacekeeping force averts further violence.

### 1970

A major Palestinian uprising in Jordan, known as Black September, pits Yasser Arafat's PLO against the Hashemite Kingdom. Facing defeat, the PLO retreats to Southern Lebanon.

### 1975

With political feuds boiling over into full-blown sectarianism, Lebanon descends into civil war. Militias form to overthrow the state, which favours Maronite Christian interests, and rid the country of Palestinians.

### 1978

Frustrated by constant attacks by PLO guerrillas on its vulnerable northern border, the IDF launches a punitive expedition into Lebanon to establish a buffer, but UN Resolution 425 compels their hasty departure.

### 1980

Hardly a year after the Shah of Iran is overthrown in a violent revolution, the lingering dispute over the Shatt al-Arab starts the Iran-Iraq War. The regime of the Ayatollahs remains committed to spreading their revolution.





## “BOMB ATTACKS ON THE ISRAELI EMBASSY AND THE AMIA COMMUNITY CENTRE IN BUENOS AIRES PROVED THAT HEZBOLLAH WOULD NEVER LET ANY TRANSGRESSION GO UNPUNISHED”



The picturesque Beqaa Valley serves as cradle for vast opium farms, idyllic villages and terrorist training camps



A Hezbollah fighter displays the organisation's flag in South Lebanon, c.2000

who had dual roles as statesman and ideologue. Its small pool of fighters, trained in the Beqaa Valley by Syrian and Iranian advisers, were never wasted on brazen attacks on the IDF. Rather, with remarkable discipline and planning, symbolic skirmishes were preferred to kill and maim Israeli soldiers – casualties that would sink morale and decrease public support for the IDF. However, Israel responded in kind. Using its technology and intelligence apparatus, it relentlessly targeted Hezbollah's leadership. In 1992, an Apache attack helicopter killed Secretary General Abbas al-Musawi, along with his wife and son, while they travelled in a convoy.

It was during the 1990s that Hezbollah's long war against Israel began in earnest. When al-Musawi was assassinated, the 32-year-old Sayed Hassan Nasrallah was elected as his replacement. Bomb attacks on the Israeli embassy and a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires proved that Hezbollah would never let any transgression go without reaction. It also cemented its reputation as a terrorist group, one that wouldn't hesitate in targeting civilians.

In Southern Lebanon, however, Hezbollah's cadres were responsible for at least 24 IDF casualties every year. It was during this long stalemate that Hezbollah perfected its art of war. It relied on small groups of gunmen for limited engagements. There was also a fascination with rockets – no doubt a carry over from the PLO – lobbed on the Shebaa Farms. This small slice of territory, claimed by Hezbollah, was an expanse of farms below the Golan Heights fed by the meltwater streams from Lebanon's Mount Hermon.

Israel eventually left Southern Lebanon in a slow disengagement from 1999 to 2000. For the exultant Hezbollah, whose fighters numbered several hundred at the most, it was a rare victory unequalled in the Arab world. Nevertheless, the following years didn't bring a lasting peace. Hezbollah remained adamant about its claim over the Shebaa Farms. Flush with cash grants from Tehran and arms deliveries from Damascus, depots for rockets, missiles and equipment were established across Southern Lebanon. The Israelis estimated Hezbollah constructed 600 different fortifications in their territory in the years after the IDF's withdrawal.

### Tit for tat

The crucible that tested Hezbollah's relevance was the devastating war launched by Israel on Lebanon in 2006. It was an armed confrontation of unrivalled ferocity, where a stronger country attacks its neighbour not to defeat it, but excise a terrorist organisation it considers an existential threat.

The showdown began with an ambush on two IDF Humvees patrolling the border in the morning of 12 July. Within minutes, both vehicles were disabled and their crews

**1982**

Using the assassination of a diplomat as a pretext, the IDF invades Lebanon on 6 June. The resulting combat soon embroils Syria and Israeli fighter jets begin to pound Beirut.

**1983**

On 18 April a truck bomb demolishes the poorly guarded US embassy in Beirut and leaves 63 dead. Six months later, the Marine Corps barracks is levelled by another attack that kills 241.



**1985**

Wilting from international pressure and mounting casualties, once the remnants of the PLO evacuate Beirut, the IDF withdraw to Southern Lebanon where they now have to contend against rebellious Shiites.

**1989**

After 15 years of gruelling civil war and an estimated 100,000 killed, Saudi Arabia arranges the Taif Accord. Lebanon's militias disarm but nascent Hezbollah refuses to let go of its weapons.

**1992**

The Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is bombed on 17 March in retaliation for the death of Hezbollah's leader Abbas al-Musawi the month before.



either injured or dead, but two Israeli soldiers, Sergeant Eldad Regev and Sergeant Ehud Goldwasser, were seized and disappeared without a trace. Upon learning Hezbollah may have captured Israeli soldiers, the local IDF commander sent a mechanised convoy to the border to interdict the guerrillas, but this too was a trap. It's believed a large improvised bomb was laid in the path of a Merkava tank. The resulting explosion killed its entire crew.

The initial ambush and the Merkava's destruction left eight soldiers dead within the span of a few hours. This was a breakthrough for Hezbollah, who had inflicted some of the heaviest casualties on record against the IDF and additional propaganda coups with the capture of Regev and Goldwasser. The official response from Tel Aviv was to launch crippling air strikes on Beirut and the largest mobilisation since 1982. Whether or not these punitive measures hurt innocent people didn't seem to matter – the whole point was to demolish Hezbollah's bases, logistics and command structure.

Israeli F-16s and F-15s levelled entire apartment blocks in the Shiite suburbs of Beirut, a phenomenal achievement that left TV crews aghast at the mounds of ashen rubble left in the bombing's wake. Further air strikes on Beirut's international airport and on national roads brought about a level of devastation unseen since the civil war. Meanwhile, villages in the south were struck again and again by 155mm shells from the IDF's M109 self-propelled howitzers. The IDF claimed these were to suppress Hezbollah missile bases – these were the elusive hideouts from where salvos of rockets were now being fired on farms and towns, even reaching as far as Haifa.

This was how the war was conducted in the span of a month. While the IDF and Hezbollah did clash on the ground, the brunt of the firepower expended by either side came from endless streams of howitzer shells, rockets, mortars and laser-guided bombs.

By the time the UN Security Council forced a ceasefire, the IDF had succeeded in laying waste to Southern Lebanon, even going so far as to carpet its valleys with illegal cluster munitions. But Hezbollah was still standing, and still held the two captured Israeli soldiers in unknown circumstances. In the end, this undid the entire effort by the IDF and played into the Hezbollah narrative of a victory. Not because Nasrallah's commanders won on the battlefield, but they had survived the worst their arch foe could throw at them.

Though the IDF claimed to have inflicted at least 500 casualties on Hezbollah and wrecked its bases, Israel's goals were muddled by poor judgement and miscalculation. Foremost was the absolute vulnerability of northern Israel to rocket attacks. If Hezbollah had used actual Scud



Lebanese soldiers stand guard during a funeral in Qana village, August 2006



## 1994

A Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires is bombed, killing 85 people and injuring 200 others. Hezbollah are believed to have orchestrated it as another retaliatory measure.

## 1997

Hadi Nasrallah, the eldest son of Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, is killed in a battle with IDF soldiers. His father only announces the death after commemorating other martyrs in a recorded broadcast.



## 2000

After years of casualties and protracted combat, the IDF begins its withdrawal from Southern Lebanon. By 24 May, not a single Israeli soldier is left and Hezbollah declares victory.

## 2005

Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is killed by a car bomb in Beirut on Valentine's Day. His death triggers massive protests against Syria whose troops evacuate Lebanon after 29 years of occupation.



## 2006

The ambush and abduction of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah triggers the Second Lebanon War. In the span of a month, the IDF demolishes parts of Beirut and Southern Lebanon while rockets pummel Northern Israel.





Amal Shiite militia engage Hezbollah forces in Beirut during the civil war, c.1988



Two Hezbollah fighters manning a Katyusha missile launcher somewhere in South Lebanon, c.2001

missiles, rather than the relatively puny Katyusha rockets, perhaps the few civilian deaths they inflicted would have ballooned to hundreds.

The cohesion of Hezbollah's guerrilla tactics came as a rude awakening. Despite battling the group for 20 years, the IDF's troops and vehicles were vulnerable to constant harassment by small teams of Hezbollah fighters, and in the town of Maroun al-Ras, a dedicated Hezbollah garrison held off the Israelis for a week. On too many instances, APCs and Merkavas were either disabled or knocked out by roadside bombs or RPG-7 and RPG-29 rockets. Other threats included the Sagger and Kornet missiles that made short work of even the toughest armour on any tank.

The last and most disappointing error was the size and range of Hezbollah's arsenal. On 14 July, an Israeli warship, the INS Ahi-Hanit, was crippled by an anti-ship missile. The IDF never published a complete tally of rocket attacks during the war but a conservative assessment reaches at least several thousand.

What did the Second Lebanon War accomplish? In 2008, the remains of Regev and Goldwasser were returned in an exchange. How the two soldiers met their fate is still unknown. Hezbollah expanded its network and multiplied its arsenal, which includes short-range ballistic missiles. The estimated size of the stockpile is now between 80,000 and 130,000 munitions.

The thunderclap of artillery is still heard in Southern Lebanon, and both the IDF and Hezbollah remain obsessed with score settling. In May 2016, Hezbollah commander, Mustafa Badreddine, was assassinated in Damascus.

Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon is growing. Support among Shiites is larger than ever, its charities run schools to groom members and its businesses are embedded in the economy. Thanks to Iranian funding and propaganda, the Party of God is a terrorist group on the verge of seizing a country. Nevertheless, the war in Syria is a distraction. Israeli generals are willing to fight, this time with deadlier technology. Is Hezbollah's day of reckoning at hand?

## HEZBOLLAH'S ACE CARD

Since its inception, Hezbollah has had a long-standing obsession with rocket artillery. Surplus stocks of Katyushas delivered from Syria proved indispensable at harassing the Israelis for decades. During the 2006 war, several thousand rockets of all types were fired at northern Israel. Today the group maintain an estimated stockpile of between 80,000 and 130,000 rockets – one of the largest in the world.



\* NOT CONFIRMED HEZBOLLAH HAVE THIS MISSILE IN POSSESSION

### 2012

With Bashar al-Assad's regime teetering, Hezbollah join the Syrian civil war, which began the previous year. Military advisors are soon followed by entire battalions of fighters.

### 2016

Saudi Arabia cancels \$4 billion worth of military aid to Lebanon in February. Nine months later, Hezbollah influences the election of President Michel Aoun, a former general and Maronite Christian.



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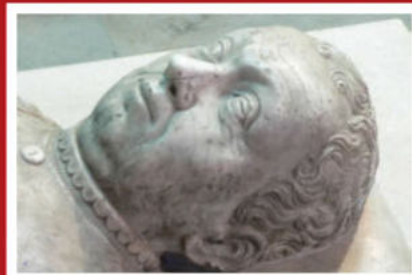


Bertrand du Guesclin as he might have appeared during his tenure as Constable of France between 1370-80. His face is based on his tomb effigy in the Basilica of Saint Denis in Paris.

The plate armour is typical of the period and it is likely that a bascinet helmet would have been worn for head protection. Du Guesclin's distinctively white surcoat bears his arms: a double-headed eagle.

His sword 'Joyeuse' is the badge of office for the constables of France. This famous blade reputedly belonged to Charlemagne and may date back to the 9th century. Now exhibited in the Louvre Museum, it was used during the coronations of French kings and du Guesclin would have been presented with it by Charles V during his inauguration as constable.

*Right: The effigy of du Guesclin. Although relatively low born his achievements meant that he was buried next to the kings of France*





# THE EAGLE OF BRITTANY

WORDS TOM GARNER

Bertrand du Guesclin was the first French commander to decisively defeat the English during the Hundred Years' War and rose from obscurity to the highest office in the kingdom

**T**he Hundred Years' War has been defined by the historical figures that emerged out of the chaos that engulfed France between 1337-1453. Most of them were English royalty and included Edward III, the Black Prince and Henry V – men who led endless campaigns to pursue what they considered to be their rightful claim to the French throne. Between them they won great victories that became famous, including the battles of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt.

It is also often presumed that an effective French resistance only emerged in the late 1420s under the unlikely leadership of the illiterate peasant girl Joan of Arc. However, this is a grave misinterpretation of events. Far from

being a continuous conflict, the period was punctuated by cycles of both war and peace and victory did not always belong to the English. Before the dramatic conquests of Henry V, there had been a remarkably successful period of French resurgence where the majority of Edward III's territorial gains were overturned. The man most responsible for this reversal was a Breton knight of obscure origins but near infinite courage: Bertrand du Guesclin.

## A Breton squire

Various nicknames as 'The Black Dog of Brocéliande' or 'The Eagle of Brittany', du Guesclin was arguably the most renowned captain who fought for France during the Hundred Years' War, but his early life gave little indication of his future greatness.

Born around 1320 near Dinan in Brittany, du Guesclin was the eldest of ten children and

his family were a minor branch of the Breton nobility. As his father was only a 'seigneur' (lord of the manor), du Guesclin was a mere squire and he grew up to become famously ugly and of small stature. One story claims that his beautiful mother rejected him at first sight.

Like many young men of his status, du Guesclin entered local military service in the 1340s as a mercenary captain in the service of Charles of Blois before entering the service of King John II of France in 1351. After succeeding his father as the seigneur of Broons du Guesclin, he was knighted by the marshal of France in 1354 and from that point on, he spent the rest of his life serving the kingdom.

Du Guesclin's first prominent action came during the Siege of Rennes between 1356-57 where he took a leading role defending the town from the besieging army of Henry of Grosmont, duke of Lancaster. This was notable in the

**Below:** During the Siege of Rennes, du Guesclin reputedly burned down an English siege tower.







*Above: Du Guesclin is seen being captured by Sir John Chandos at the Battle of Auray*

wake of almost unbroken English successes, particularly after the crushing Battle of Poitiers the previous year. One man who recognised the emerging talent of du Guesclin was the Dauphin Charles, who granted him a life pension of 200 livres and named him the captain of Pontorson, which was a strategic fortress on the Breton-Norman frontier.

Following this initial achievement, du Guesclin suffered a series of setbacks when he was captured by the English twice between 1359-60. In a telling sign of how low French fortunes had sunk, du Guesclin paid his ransoms by borrowing money from the duke of Orléans, who was himself a prisoner in the Tower of London.

By the 1360s, France was crippled. With John II held prisoner by Edward III after Poitiers, the English demanded a huge ransom of 3 million crowns as part of the Treaty of Brétigny. Under its terms, the English retained Aquitaine and acquired new territories that comprised a quarter of France in full sovereignty. Nevertheless, upon John's death in 1364, the kingdom gained a new monarch who would largely reverse the humiliations of Brétigny.

### Cocherel and Auray

Charles V's succession to the throne was difficult. Even before his father's death, he had to contend with the English and the king of Navarre, known as 'Charles the Bad'. This Pyrenean monarch held extensive lands in Normandy, which enabled him to blockade Paris. When he was deprived of what he saw as his rightful claim to the duchy of Burgundy, Charles the Bad raised two armies and passed through Aquitaine en route to Normandy with the Black Prince's permission. His Anglo-Gascon forces were commanded by a notable soldier called Jean de Grailly, Captal de Buch but the Dauphin Charles already had 1,000 'routier' mercenaries in Normandy.

This small force was ostensibly commanded by the count of Auxerre, but it was actually led by du Guesclin who followed Charles's orders to attack Navarrese fortresses. By the time the captal arrived in Normandy, most of the strongholds had surrendered and du Guesclin blocked his eastern path in a defensive line before the River Eure. The captal's army numbered around 6,000, in comparison to the 1,500-3,000 that du Guesclin had scraped

together, but neither commander wanted to make the first move. The opposing armies faced each other in a two-day standoff near Houlbec-Cocherel.

On 16 May 1364, du Guesclin attempted to withdraw when his food supplies ran low but the captal was determined to prevent his escape and sent in his cavalry to outflank the French and block their access to the Eure bridge. The Battle of Cocherel was now in earnest and it was strongly contested. The Navarrese army initially had the upper hand, thanks to their superior numbers, but the French managed to outflank them. Du Guesclin then forced a retreat when he deployed his Breton reserves. Miserably surprised by this reversal of fortune, the captal's forces fled and he was personally surrounded with 50 of his men and fought in a bloody last stand. The captal was wounded and captured while the majority of his men were killed.

It was a dramatic victory for du Guesclin, and his success bode well for the future as the battle had taken place only three days before Charles V's coronation. Charles the Bad's military dominance was broken and Navarre never seriously threatened France again.

One king may have been defeated but Charles V still had many problems. Although the war with England was officially over, it nevertheless continued in du Guesclin's home duchy of Brittany. Over 20 years, two factions under the houses of Blois and Montfort fought for the ducal title and the English ruthlessly

**"IN A TELLING SIGN OF HOW LOW FRENCH FORTUNES HAD SUNK, DU GUESCLIN PAID HIS RANSOMS BY BORROWING MONEY FROM THE DUKE OF ORLÉANS, WHO WAS HIMSELF A PRISONER IN THE TOWER OF LONDON"**



## “LARGE GROUPS OF MERCENARIES RAMPAGED AT WILL ACROSS FRANCE WITHOUT A SUFFICIENT FORCE TO COUNTER THEM”

exploited the destabilising situation. Charles supported the Blois faction and du Guesclin was sent to Brittany in September 1364 to aid Duke Charles of Blois in his claim.

The two armies of Blois and John of Montfort met at Auray on 29 September and the Montfortian army was conspicuous due to its extensive use of English soldiers and commanders. Out of the five commanders fighting against du Guesclin, three were English and the famous longbowmen were a conspicuous presence. Against this military machine, du Guesclin's chances were unfavourable and although the armies were evenly matched at between 3,500-4,000 men, the English-dominated Montfortians prevailed.

The combat was particularly bloody as both sides wanted the encounter to end the Breton war and no quarter was given. The most significant casualty was Charles of Blois, who was killed, and du Guesclin was forced to surrender to the English commander, Sir John Chandos, but only after he had broken all of his weapons. John of Montfort was now recognised by Charles V as Duke John IV but despite du Guesclin's defeat, Charles ransomed him and he was soon back in royal service. The reason for this rehabilitation became clear as the king needed du Guesclin to deal with perhaps the most serious problem in his kingdom besides the English: the merciless 'routiers'.

### ‘Routiers’ and Spain

After the Treaty of Brétigny, many soldiers were left unemployed, particularly those who had served under Edward III or the Black Prince. While on campaign, these men had grown accustomed to living off the land and



Above: The 'Combat of the Thirty' was a small fight in 1351 when handpicked Breton, French and English knights fought over the Breton succession. It was considered an exemplary example of chivalry

## THE FIGHT FOR BRITTANY

### THE BIRTHPLACE OF DU GUESCLIN WAS A PROUD DUCHY THAT ACTED AS A PAWN IN THE BLOODY POWER GAMES BETWEEN ENGLAND AND FRANCE

To talk of 'France' in the modern sense cannot be accurately applied to its status during the Middle Ages. Although the French king technically ruled all the lands that roughly make up the country as we know it today, regional power was highly devolved and dukes often ruled as semi-independent powers. Brittany was no exception. It was one of the most powerful duchies in the kingdom and was therefore, a fierce battleground between the kings of England and France.

Located on the far western peninsula of France, Brittany was unique. Unlike the Frankish majority, the population descended from Britons and had their own language and cultural identity. This separateness made the local dukes fiercely independent and they only paid a token homage to the king of France. This led to open conflict in 1341, when there was a power struggle for the duchy. The French

counts of Blois claimed Brittany but were opposed by the Montforts, who were related to the ancient dukes. The subsequent War of Breton Succession lasted for 23 years and occurred at a time when the first major phase of the Hundred Years' War was at its height. The English ruthlessly exploited this destabilised situation and supported the Montforts, while the French backed the Blois'.

Du Guesclin, who was a proud Breton himself, became embroiled in this fight and his loyalty to the French monarchy compromised his affection for his homeland. His defeat at the Battle of Auray in 1364 not only ended the war in the Montfort's favour, but also gave him a lifelong sense of split loyalties, which culminated in a royal loss of favour towards the end of his life. Even today, some Breton nationalists view du Guesclin as a traitor for his allegiance to France.

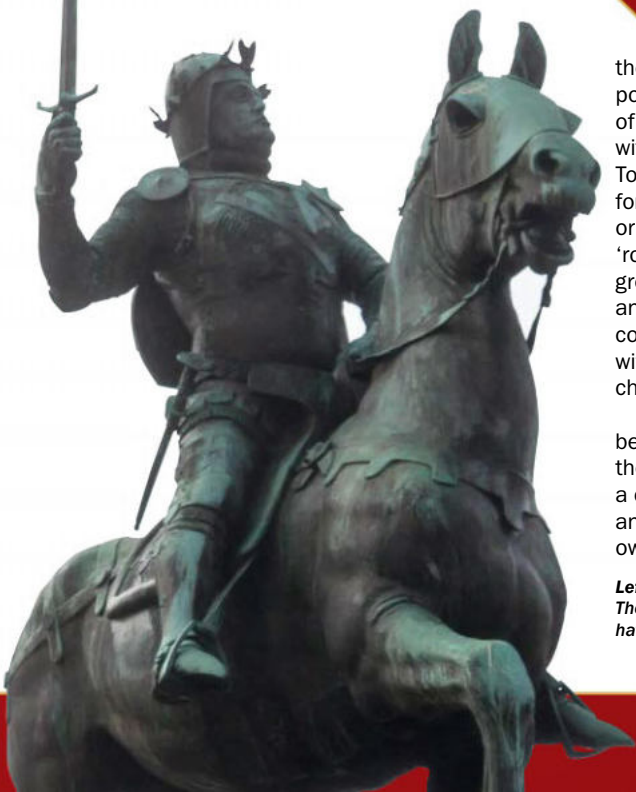
they were reluctant to return home to a life of poverty or serfdom. As a result, large groups of mercenaries rampaged at will across France without a sufficient force to counter them. To protect their interests, the mercenaries formed into bands known as 'Free Companies' or 'routes' and they then became known as 'routiers'. One chronicler wrote that these groups, "...wasted all the country without cause and robbed, without sparing, all that ever they could get. They violated and defiled women without pity and slewed men, women and children without mercy."

The routiers were particularly dangerous because of their professionalism. Not only were they former soldiers, but each company had a command structure with a staff to collect and distribute loot and some even had their own uniforms. Their nationalities varied and

included Bretons, Spaniards and Germans but the majority were either Gascon or English with the latter being the most dominant group. Tellingly, the French described all routiers as 'English' and many of the most successful captains were enemies of du Guesclin, such as Sir Robert Knolles and Sir Hugh Calveley. Knolles became so notorious for burning towns that charred gables were nicknamed 'Knolles's Mitres'. Elsewhere, Sir John Harleston's routiers once had a party where they drank from 100 chalices stolen from Champagne churches.

This organised chaos was a widespread problem and Charles V had neither the troops nor money to deal with them. However, he sent du Guesclin to rid Anjou of the routiers. This was a shrewd move as du Guesclin was a former mercenary himself, but the Breton managed to clear the area in a short space of time. In 1365, an opportunity arose when a pretender to the Castilian throne called Henry of Trastámara asked Charles for assistance against his

Left: A statue of Bertrand du Guesclin in Dinan, Brittany. The low born Breton's feats during the Hundred Years' War have been overshadowed by Joan of Arc





half-brother King Pedro the Cruel. Sensing an opportunity, Charles ordered du Guesclin to recruit every routier he could find and sent this new army to Spain to assist Henry.

At first, du Guesclin's army performed well and many fortresses were captured, including Briviesca, Magallon and even the Castilian capital of Burgos. Henry was delighted with the results and proclaimed du Guesclin as the ruler of Granada, even though the Moors still held that territory. However, as Aquitaine was on the other side of the Pyrenees, it was not long before the English saw another chance to harass the French. Like the war in Brittany, the Castilian Civil War was a sub-conflict of the wider wars with England, and Edward the Black Prince was an ally of Pedro.

Edward led an Anglo-Gascon army into Spain to fight du Guesclin's force, which led to a famous battle at Nájera on 3 April 1367. The clash was notable for the use of English longbowmen in an unfamiliar landscape away from France and the British Isles. Du Guesclin led a hand-picked vanguard of 1,500 men-at-arms and 500 crossbowmen in Henry's Franco-Castilian army – outnumbering Edward's force.

Directly facing him was a division of English archers and infantrymen led by Edward's brother, John of Gaunt. Captal de Buch, du Guesclin's defeated enemy from Cocherel, was also present. During the battle, du Guesclin was engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting with Gaunt's division in the centre while chaos raged all around. The English archers inflicted heavy damage on Henry's light cavalry on the flanks, which eventually caused them and the infantry to flee. Du Guesclin, who was surrounded in the centre, was completely unaware of the rout and only surrendered when he was informed of the situation. By the time the battle was over, a quarter of his force was dead and virtually everyone else was injured.

## “KNOWN AS ‘CHARLES THE WISE’, HE WAS PHYSICALLY FRAIL BUT WAS NEVERTHELESS, HIGHLY EDUCATED AND PRAGMATICALLY RESOURCEFUL”

Nájera was a painful defeat but once again Charles V quickly ransomed du Guesclin as he now considered him to be invaluable. The Breton returned to Spain with a larger army and this time his fortunes changed when Edward left Spain after Pedro refused to pay the English campaign costs. Henry was now in a stronger position and at the Battle of Montiel on 14 March 1369, Pedro was decisively defeated. The victory was largely du Guesclin's achievement; he led Henry's army and used enveloping tactics to crush Pedro's Castilian-Moorish force. Despite this success, the greater drama came immediately after the battle.

Pedro fled to Montiel Castle and attempted to bribe the pursuing du Guesclin to allow him to escape. Du Guesclin agreed but he also informed Henry, who also bribed him to lead him to Pedro's tent. Once inside, the brothers began a fight to the death with daggers. Pedro gained the upper hand but at the last moment, the compromised du Guesclin took hold of Pedro, which allowed Henry to kill him. During this complicity in regal fratricide, du Guesclin is alleged to have said: “I neither put nor remove a king, but I help my master.” This wilful abdication of responsibility reaped its dubious reward and a grateful Henry proclaimed du Guesclin as Duke of Molina and sealed the Franco-Castilian alliance. With his work completed, du Guesclin returned to France to once more aid his king.

### Constable of France

By 1370, Charles V was ready to take the fight back to the English. Known as ‘Charles the Wise’, he was physically frail but

nevertheless highly educated and pragmatic. He stopped sending the crippling ransom payments that were still owed for John II's English imprisonment and reorganised his taxation system to fund a new force that was arguably France's first standing army. This consisted of 3,000-6,000 men-at-arms and 800 crossbowmen. He also gave orders for townsmen to practice archery and to keep castles in good repair.

These preparations were made for a military offensive but not one that involved direct confrontations with the English. Charles knew that his armies could not defeat them in open battle and so he contrived to win back his lost territory by adopting a scorched earth policy, guerrilla raids and forbidding his troops to openly engage the English.

Perhaps his most radical strategy was breaking with knightly chivalric traditions by appointing commanders who had proved themselves as captains of frontier garrisons or even as routiers. These men would not be paladins but hardnosed professionals, and chief among these soldiers was du Guesclin himself.

In 1370, Charles appointed the former squire as Constable of France. This ancient office made du Guesclin the highest officer in the land after the king and effectively commander-in-chief of his military forces. Senior members of the nobility usually filled the position, but Charles needed a seasoned soldier who could appeal to the routiers to fight for him. In this regard, despite his patchy military record, du Guesclin was perfect. He also agreed with Charles's strategy and from the outset, the French began to achieve successes against their ancient foe.

## THE FABIAN STRATEGY

THE FRENCH RESURGENCE IN THE 1370S OWED MUCH TO A UNIQUE METHOD OF WARFARE WHERE AVOIDING BATTLES COULD WIN CAMPAIGNS

Du Guesclin was one of the most famous Medieval implementers of an unorthodox but effective method of campaigning: the Fabian strategy.

The strategy's approach involves one side avoiding large, pitched battles in favour of smaller actions that wear down the enemy's will to fight through attrition. It is a difficult approach to warfare, as frequent retreats and less obvious signs of victory can be demoralising. It also requires favourable lengths of time and a strong will from both soldiers and politicians.

During the Hundred Years' War, Charles V and his constable used their combined talents and France's great size to carry out a successful Fabian strategy between 1370-80. Du Guesclin used tactics such as raids, ambushes, night attacks and frequent harassment to whittle down English regional power. He would concentrate on small, isolated garrisons, attacking foraging parties and cutting communications.

These guerrilla actions were reinforced by shrewd negotiating skills. Good terms, and even rewards were offered at sieges to

ensure a quick surrender and du Guesclin always made a point of keeping his word. He also offered protection to French inhabitants in English territory if they rose against their masters. The strategy worked well, particularly as du Guesclin stuck to Charles V's orders not to directly engage the English and consequently, large swathes of French land were won back.

The French Fabian strategy was not a new concept and it actually derives its name from the methods used by Roman dictator Fabius Maximus, to defeat Hannibal in Italy. It has also been used by a diverse number of generals and countries, including George Washington, the Russians against Napoleon in 1812, the Vietnamese during the First Indochina War and even insurgents during the Iraq War.

“REWARDS WERE OFFERED AT SIEGES TO ENSURE A QUICK SURRENDER AND DU GUESCLIN ALWAYS MADE A POINT OF KEEPING HIS WORD”

*Right: Fabius Maximus is regarded the father of guerrilla warfare and gave his name to the concept of 'Fabian Strategy'*







**Above:** The Battle of Montiel in 1369 saw the defeat of Pedro the Cruel at the hands of du Guesclin and sealed an alliance between France and Castile

The test came almost immediately when Sir Robert Knolles launched a large raid into the Île de France and devastated the countryside up to the gates of Paris in September 1370. From his palace, Charles V could even see the rising smoke of burning villages, but he still refused to engage in battle. Du Guesclin deliberately waited until the enemy split up and then pounced on a contingent of 4,000 men led by Sir Thomas Grandison at Pontvallain on 4 December.

After a night march, the fight began at dawn with the French initially taking heavy casualties but the English were eventually either killed or captured, including Grandison. A similar fight took place at a nearby engagement at Vaas and Knolles was forced to call off his raid; the pursuing du Guesclin subsequently killed around 300 English soldiers outside the gates of Bressuire.

Although it was a relatively small battle, Pontvallain broke the decades-old aura of English invincibility and du Guesclin proceeded to reconquer Poitou and Saintonge between 1371-72 and even temporarily overran Brittany in 1373. During these campaigns, and the ones that followed for the next five years, du

Guesclin slowly clawed back French lands and made inroads into English Aquitaine. There were even French naval raids on English home territories such as Guernsey, Rye, Plymouth and Lewes.

Du Guesclin's high point as constable arguably came in 1377, when he defeated Edward III's Aquitanian representative Thomas Felton at the Battle of Eymet. So many soldiers drowned after the battle that the area around the River Dropt was known as the 'Englishmen's Hole' for centuries afterwards. After Eymet, du Guesclin came within a day's march of Bordeaux and took Bergerac.

Although Pontvallain and Eymet were notable battlefield victories, du Guesclin's successes were largely won by deliberately avoiding the English. Consequently, the English were left with no one to fight and they wasted vast resources marching through French territory on fruitless campaigns. The most costly was arguably John of Gaunt's 1373 raid, which struck out from Calais to Bordeaux and covered 965 kilometres in five months. The English cut a huge swathe of destruction through central France but they lost 5,000 men out of 11,000 and huge amounts of supplies without

capturing a single town or fighting any battle. Consequently, by the mid-1370s, English territory in France had shrunk to the area around Calais and a reduced Aquitaine.

This achievement was due to the combined work of Charles V and du Guesclin but this military odd couple would end their partnership on poor terms. Although he had loyally served the French crown for decades, du Guesclin was proud of his Breton roots and when Charles confiscated Brittany in 1378, the constable opposed the decision. He carried out the subsequent campaign into his homeland half-heartedly. The constable now lost favour with the king for the first time and was dispatched far from court to Languedoc to suppress the routiers in the region. While he was besieging Chateaufort-de-Randon, du Guesclin caught a fever and died aged around 60 on 13 July 1380. The sickly Charles died three weeks later but not before he had given orders for his loyal constable to be buried among the kings of France at the Basilica of Saint Denis.

This final act turned the already highly popular du Guesclin into a folk hero. Here was a man who had fought his way from the status of a lowly squire, to being considered the equal of kings and in the process liberating the majority of France from a relentless invader. The kingdom would not see his like again for half a century.

**“SO MANY SOLDIERS DROWNED AFTER THE BATTLE THAT THE AREA AROUND THE RIVER DROPT WAS KNOWN AS THE ‘ENGLISHMEN’S HOLE’ FOR CENTURIES AFTERWARDS”**

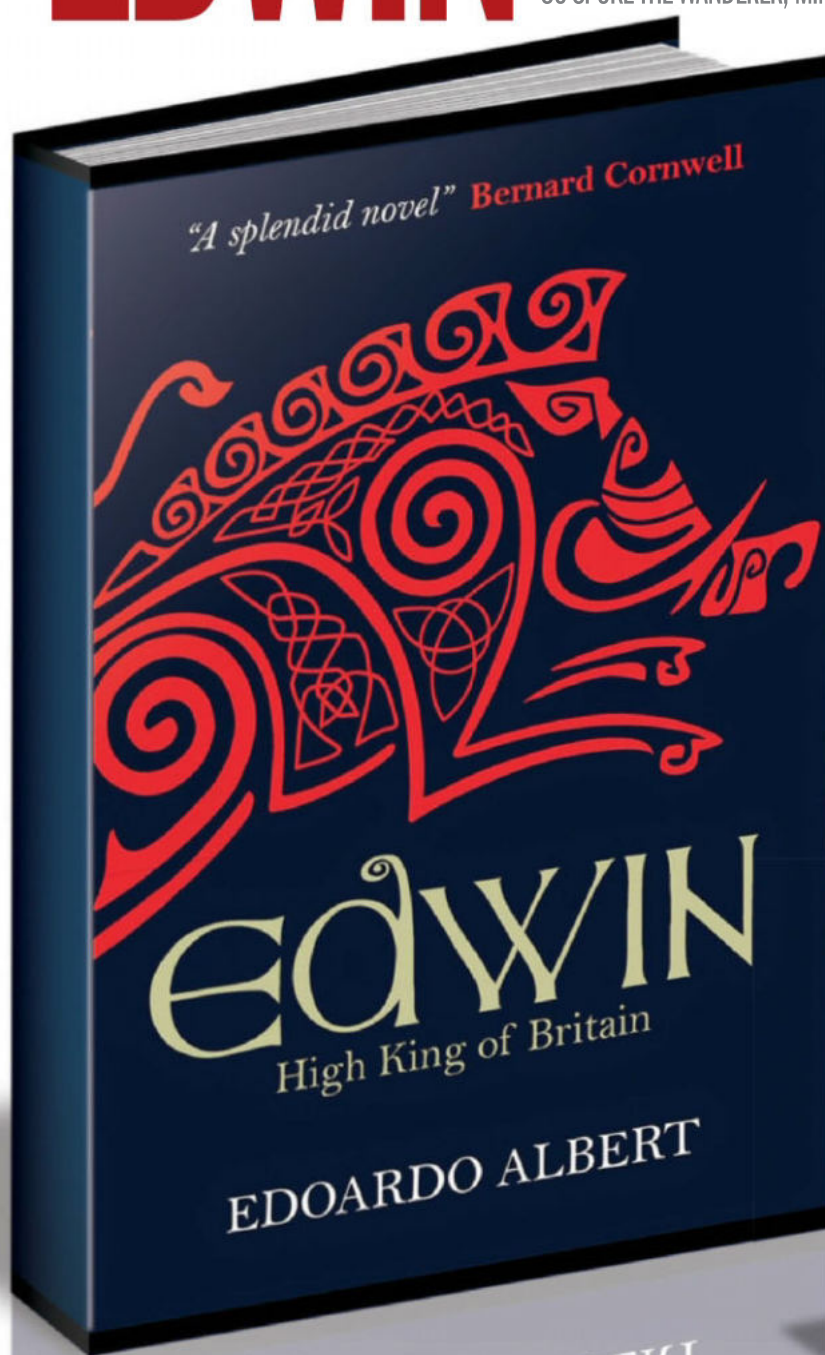


# REVIEWS

Our pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

## EDWIN HIGH KING OF BRITAIN

**Author:** Edoardo Albert **Publisher:** Lion Hudson **Price:** £7.99 **Released:** Out now  
SO SPOKE THE WANDERER, MINDFUL OF HARDSHIPS, FIERCE SLAUGHTERS AND THE DOWNFALL OF KINSMEN



This début fiction novel by Edoardo Albert focuses on an often forgotten figure from Anglo-Saxon history and someone who is overdue some exposure, king Edwin.

The novel comes under the banner historical fiction and for setting, events and physical objects this is certainly true. The dialogue and character motivations are mostly inventions of the author but not because he is flaunting historical fact, but rather that we don't actually have the sources to flesh out the personalities of these figures. Albert's firm grasp of the Anglo-Saxon period put him in good stead to envision these for us.

The battle scenes ignore the flash and heroic might usually seen in historical or fantasy novels and bring the violence down to earth, with contemporary tactics and believable army sizes taking the centre stage.

Those unfamiliar with Anglo-Saxon culture will no doubt spend the first portion of the book flicking to the front, where the author has helpfully provided a pronunciation guide and a small glossary to help brush up on any unknown phrases or words.

This book is faithful to the rather Darwinian nature of kingship in this period so the main characters can sometimes come across as unsympathetic, acting no different to their enemies on some occasions.

In short, the book offers an insight into an often forgotten period of British history and is able to transport the reader back more than a thousand years with its authentic and enjoyable style.

**"THE MAIN CHARACTERS CAN SOMETIMES COME ACROSS AS UNSYMPATHETIC, ACTING NO DIFFERENT TO THEIR ENEMIES ON SOME OCCASIONS"**

The Northumbrian Thrones trilogy continues with *Oswald: Return of the King* and *Oswiu: King of Kings*





# POWER AND GLORY

**FRANCE'S SECRET WARS WITH BRITAIN AND AMERICA, 1945-2016**

**Author:** RT Howard **Publisher:** Biteback Publishing **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now

**FIRM ALLIES IN TWO WORLD WARS, BEHIND CLOSED DOORS ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS ARE VERY DIFFERENT**

As the editor of an international magazine focusing on intelligence issues, you would expect the author of this book to offer illuminating insights into the murky political background into France's relationship with the rest of the world. RT Howard does not disappoint.

*Power And Glory* is able to raise an eyebrow – sometimes both – on every page, with an enthralling combination of deep knowledge, impeccable research and first-rate writing skills.

If you've ever thought the French are a bit prickly with the British, and wondered why, this is the book for you.

It lays out the origins of France's deep mistrust with the Anglo-Saxon world, including Australia, Canada and, most importantly, America and Britain. Howard explains how the centuries of sparring with 'perfidious Albion', not to mention the sting of usually ending up on the losing side, has created a deep and pervasive mistrust on the other side of the Channel.

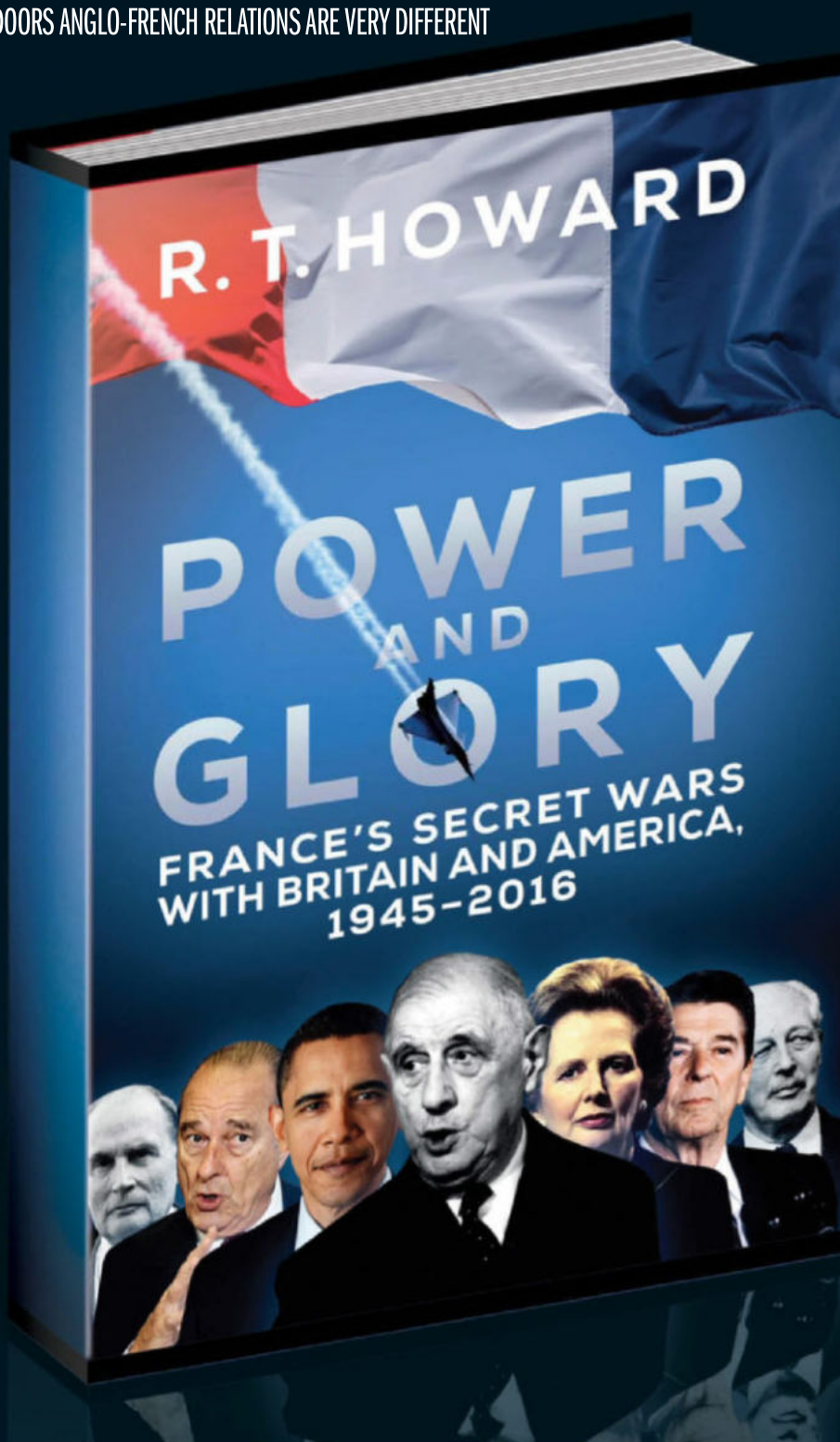
After sketching the broad parameters of his book in an engrossing introduction, Howard then deals with specific instances that elaborate on his theme. Starting with Syria in 1945, he proceeds through such flashpoints as Indochina, Algeria and the Falklands before concluding, neatly, back in Syria.

French mistrust of British (and, increasingly, American) motives has led to some bizarre actions, analysed in detail in these pages. Paranoid over the loss of their global status (not to mention their empire), the French, at least as portrayed here, must be a nightmare to deal with.

*Below: French troops made use of US made M24 Chaffee light tanks during the First Indochina War*



**"IF YOU'VE EVER THOUGHT THE FRENCH ARE A BIT PRICKLY WITH THE BRITISH, AND WONDERED WHY, THIS IS THE BOOK FOR YOU"**





## ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING



### THE LUFTWAFFE IN COLOUR: THE VICTORY YEARS, 1939-1942 CHRISTOPHE CONY, JEAN-LOUIS ROBA

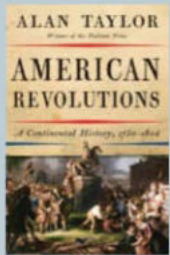
There's no shortage of coloured images from World War II. Some are good, transporting us to those dark days of world history, others are over-saturated and cartoonish, diminishing the raw realism of the unadulterated photograph on which they are based. It's sometimes easy to forget that genuine colour images from the period do exist. *The Luftwaffe In Colour* collects 300 such pictures from magazines and private collections, which together tell the story of the evolution of one of the world's most feared air forces, from its pre-war incarnation as a training organisation to the height of its success during the middle years of the conflict.



### GREAT BRITISH ECCENTRICS SD TUCKER

An inclination towards eccentricity has, for a long time, been considered something quintessentially British. Whether it's a fair perception or not, and how we became such an apparent bastion of peculiarity is open to debate, but that's not what *Great British Eccentrics* is about. Instead, SD Tucker's book is a celebratory who's who of Britain's more colourful, peculiar and outlandish characters.

You'll meet anarchic aristocrats, archetypal cat-ladies, "visionary" inventors and occultists, as well as familiar. Tucker's concise biographies paint Britain as a breeding ground for those that feel most comfortable when diverging from the norm.



### AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS, A CONTINENTAL HISTORY, 1750-1804 ALAN TAYLOR

As the hectoring rhetoric during the recent US election reminded everyone, the USA is a patchwork of ethnic diversity. The thing is, it's been that way for more than 300 years. Ever since its indigenous population was first forced from its lands by white European settlers. It's this inconvenient truth that lies at the heart of Alan Taylor's new book about the origins and aftermath of the American Revolution – or what he more accurately calls the American Revolutions.

To paraphrase the Declaration of Independence, all men might have been created equal, but as Taylor explains, many men (and fewer women) would find equality in America's post-revolutionary order. The subsequent drive west was described by Thomas Jefferson as an expanding "empire of liberty." In the event, though, it proved anything but. This book is a fascinating and timely reminder of the truth behind the United States of America's troubled and bloody birth.

# KING CNU

## AND THE VIKING CONQUEST OF ENGLAND 1016

**Author:** WB Bartlett **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now  
CNU DIDN'T JUST DIP HIS TOES IN THE TIDE, HE INVAD

Ask the man in the street how many times England has been successfully invaded and he'll reply, "Twice. The Romans and the Normans." Ask a historian, particularly one specialising in constitutional history, and he'll add a third: William and Mary's invasion in 1688.

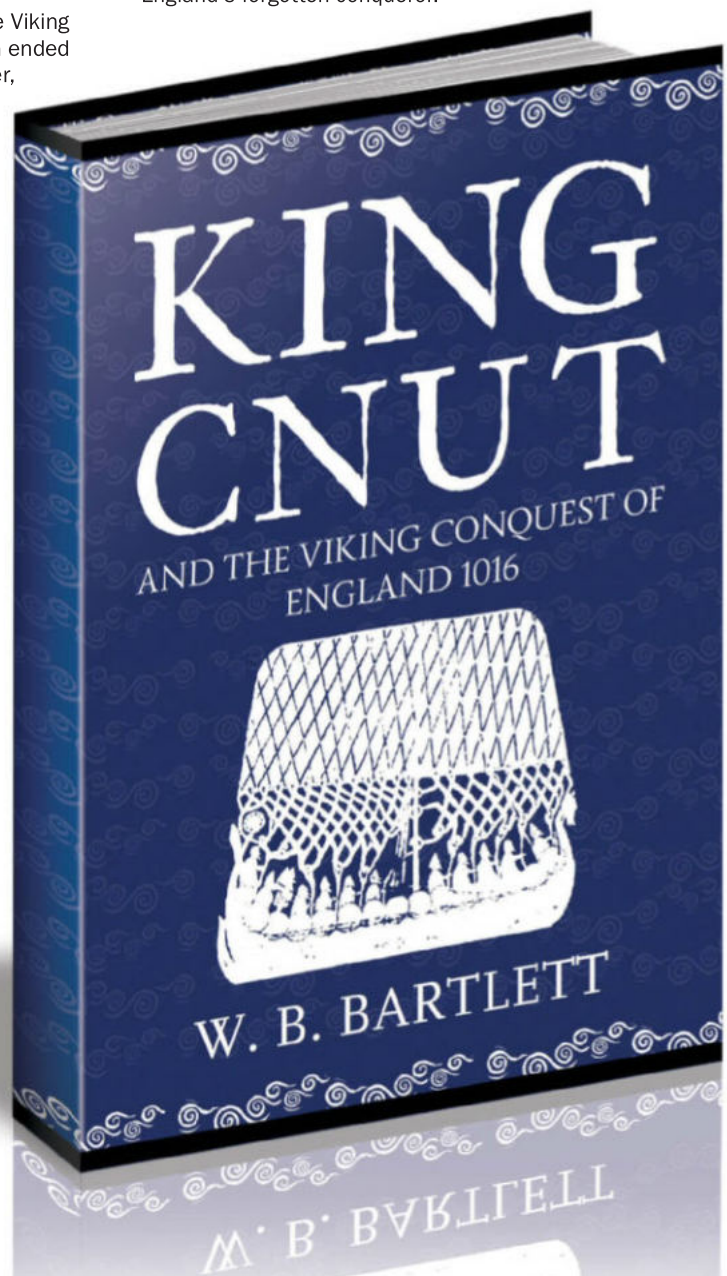
They're all wrong. There have been at least five successful invasions of England. These three, plus the Anglo-Saxons slowly carving an England separate from Britain and then, 50 years before the one date in English history everyone knows, the Vikings finally succeeded in what they'd been trying to do for the previous 150 years.

This long-overdue book covers the Viking invasions that first crippled and then ended the reign of England's worst king ever, Æthelred, and the man who finally succeeded him, Cnut. In his homeland of Denmark, Cnut's name is invariably followed by his appellation, 'the Great', but in England, where he spent most of his adult life and where he was buried, he is all but forgotten. His fame as a conqueror is eclipsed by the man who followed him 50 years later. Bartlett's book seeks to redress that balance, and it does a good job of demonstrating what a remarkable king Cnut was, holding together a sea-spanning empire encompassing Denmark, England, Norway and much of Sweden.

As a sea pirate with imperial pretensions, Cnut did all that he could to ensure the history makers of his time – the clerks of the church – were on his side,

as well as doing what he could in later life to atone for the judicious murders of his early life, which had made his grasp on the crown more secure. The book is thorough in its exploration of the man and his time, although a little on the bloodless side. This is no fault of the author, but rather inherent in the limited contemporary sources – mainly chronicles and charters – that do not lend themselves to rounded character portraits. Later, Norse sagas add colour but the careful historian, and Bartlett is careful, has to be cautious about adding these details to what is a sober assessment of England's forgotten conqueror.

**"THIS LONG-OVERDUE BOOK COVERS THE VIKING INVASIONS THAT FIRST CRIPPLED AND THEN ENDED THE REIGN OF ENGLAND'S WORST KING EVER, ÆTHELRED"**





# THE PATH TO WAR: HOW THE FIRST WORLD WAR CREATED MODERN AMERICA

**Author:** Michael S Neiberg **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now

## HOW OLD WORLD IDENTITIES GAVE WAY TO THE 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

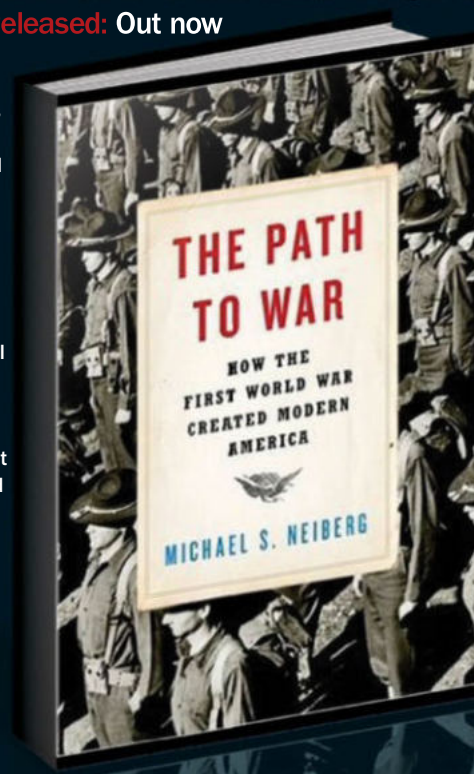
At the dawn of the 20th century, the United States was a power hiding behind oceans. In the first decades of the 21st century it is the world's only hyperpower, able to project its military and cultural influence to every corner of the world. This fascinating book – at least, it's fascinating for those with an interest in the political and sociological history of America – tells how America made the decisive turn towards engagement with the outside world.

It may be hard to realise now, but through most of its history, isolationism has been the strongest strand to America's foreign policy. Its founders and first generations of immigrants crossed the sea to escape the wars and persecutions – political and religious – of the Old World. Having found a home in the New World, they had no wish to engage in the wars of their old homes. So when World War I broke out, the United States remained neutral. Not only did this keep it out of the war, neutrality brought huge profits in its wake, as American goods and products found ready markets among all the combatants.

However, such blood profits sat uneasily on American consciences, bought as they were in

the immolation of a continent that many Americans still thought of as home. For none was this problem more acute, than for German-Americans. Where did their loyalty lie? At first, they pushed for continued American neutrality, but as the war continued and incidents such as the sinking of the Lusitania increased anti-German feeling, such a position became increasingly untenable. War was coming, and German-Americans, in common with Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans and the other national groups, came to the one, common conclusion; they were Americans before they were anything else. Thus, World War I killed off the 19th-century American experiment in multiculturalism (played out in a multitude of national-language newspapers and societies) and ushered in a new consciousness of what it was to be American.

Neiberg tells the story of this profound change through an encyclopaedic knowledge of the time, ranging from popular songs, through speeches and newspaper articles, to the letters of people ranging from Theodore Roosevelt to mothers contemplating the possibility of their sons being called up. It's a great piece of scholarship – but only bother with reading it if you're interested in the subject.



# THE WHITE SNIPER

## THE DEADLIEST SNIPER IN HISTORY

**Author:** Tapio Saarelainen **Publisher:** Casemate **Price:** £19.95 **Released:** Out now

## DESPITE THE ACCESS THIS WORLD WAR II BIOGRAPHY FAILS TO HIT ITS MARK

The story of Simo Häyhä is a remarkable one. Selected as a sniper during the Winter War of 1939-1940, thanks to his proficiency as a marksman, he killed 542 Soviet soldiers in a little less than 100 days, making him the most prolific sniper in history.

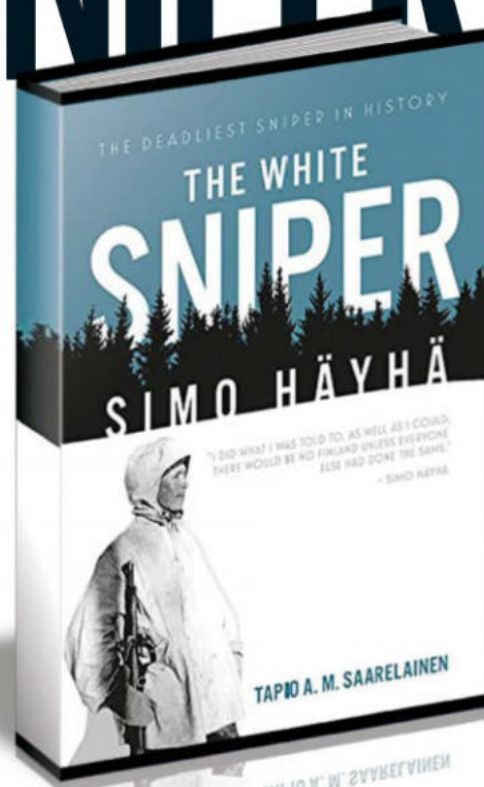
The author, himself a sniper in the Finnish army, ought to have had a special affinity with his subject and much is made of his ability to engage Häyhä in interviews where previous biographers have failed.

Sadly, Saarelainen does not make the most of this precious access and the result is a rather sterile presentation of the facts of Häyhä's life.

Awkwardly arranged, the book is plagued by sub-headings, making it difficult to get

into a comfortable flow when reading. More importantly, Saarelainen proves unable to get to the most important questions, whether Häyhä was unwilling to talk or Saarelainen was not a gifted enough interviewer. We get little insight, for instance, into the psychological impact that killing 542 men must have.

In fact, all throughout the book, the grisly business of war is presented in sanitised terms. 'Targets' are 'destroyed' and his mounting number of successes (once numbering an incredible 25 in a single day) is referred to as his 'tally'. Much is made of the fact that Häyhä was just following his orders, and there is no doubt this is the truth. This book, however, fails to consider the fact that the same could be said for the 542 Soviets.





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# MORION HELMET

A decorative, yet practical, piece of armour designed to be worn by the elite troops of the Electorate of Saxony

**M**ost commonly associated with the Spanish conquistadores, this distinctive Morion style of light helmet was popular all over Europe during the Renaissance period and is recognisable for its broad crest, or comb, spanning along the top. The open design allowed the wearer far more visibility than earlier Medieval helmets and was in-step with the more flexible, mobile use of cavalry in Renaissance warfare. The helmet was most commonly worn by light cavalymen, but was also featured as a part of more ceremonial uniforms.

This particular helmet was worn by a personal bodyguard of the Electors of Saxony, and is dated to the mid-to-late 16th century. The scene depicted on the helmet's side is a

myth from Ancient Rome, which bears great significance for the important role of the Elector's Guard. The myth recalls, that in around 362 BCE, a huge chasm opened up beneath Rome and only could be closed if the citizens sacrificed what was most precious to them. As the story goes, a young soldier named Marcus Curtius sacrificed himself to save the city – a clear allegory for guards ready to lay down their lives for their lord.

Towards the end of the 16th and into the 17th century, these helmets gradually changed to counter the increasing

use of firearms on Europe's battlefields, though many out-dated designs of the previous century were still used during the Thirty Years'

War and beyond. Today, the famous Swiss guardsmen defending the Catholic Pope still wear Morion design helmets.

*Left: The ornate golden designs on this helmet suggests the Elector's requirement for prestige as well as protection*

Christian I, Elector of Saxony (left) between 1586-1591



Image: Alamy

**"THE SCENE DEPICTED ON THE HELMET'S SIDE IS A MYTH FROM ANCIENT ROME, WHICH BEARS GREAT SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE ELECTOR'S GUARD"**



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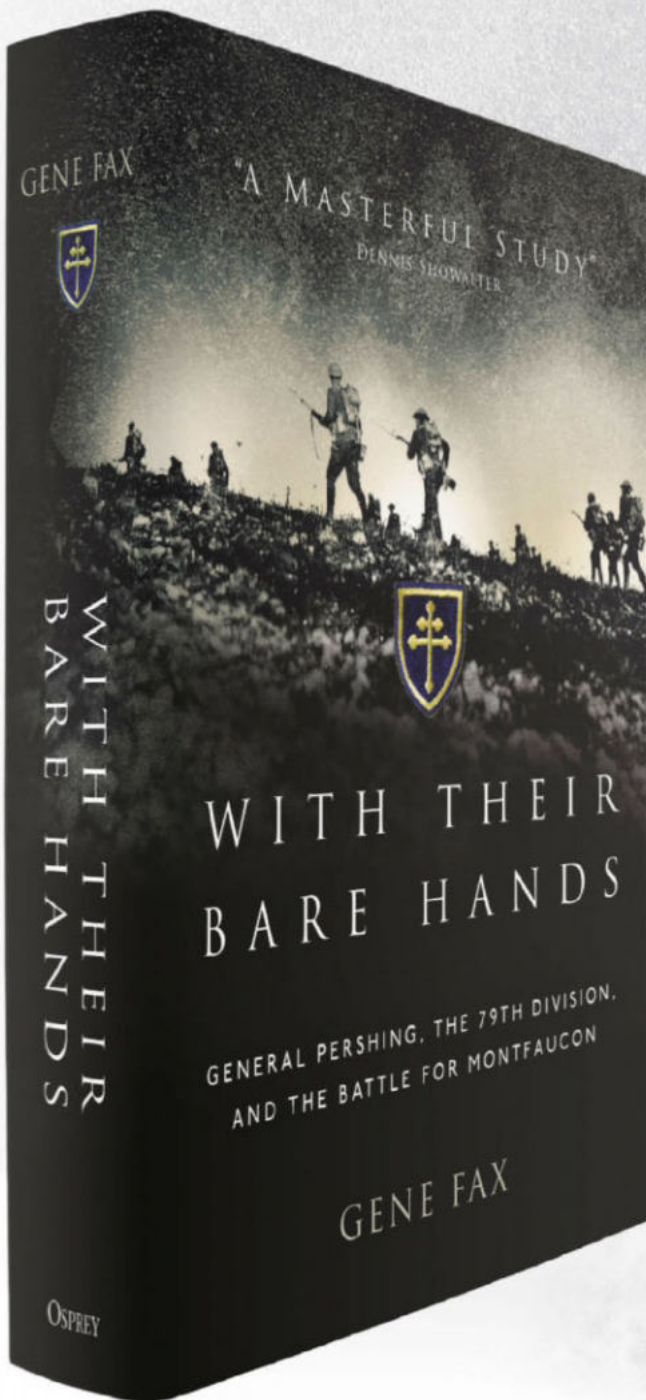
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